

Irondequoit sued over health plans

■ Retirees say town switched them unfairly to coverage that costs more.

BY STAFF WRITER

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A group of retirees who filed suit against the town of Irondequoit over changes to their health care plans had their day in court last week and may have a judgment within a few months.

Arguing before U.S. District Judge David G. Larimer, plaintiff's attorney J. Nelson Thomas claimed the town breached an

agreement with nonunion retirees in March 2001 when the town changed their health coverage from Blue Cross/Blue Shield Blue Million Preferred to the Blue Choice Senior plan.

Attorney Lisa Sofferin argued that the town was only obligated to continue giving retirees Blue Cross/Blue Shield coverage — not a specific plan.

The case was filed in July by town retirees Hubert Lawrence, Ameila Fontana, Roger Fox and John Magin. Their suit also alleges age discrimination.

Under the new insurance benefits package, retirees age 80 or older kept their existing coverage, while retirees 65 to 80 were switched to Blue Choice Senior and retirees 64 and younger were given Blue Choice Select.

Blue Choice Senior carries higher out-of-pocket costs for prescription drug coverage. Retirees who had been paying a \$7 co-pay per 34-day supply of drugs were given a plan that covers only 50 percent of drug costs, up to \$1,000 per calendar year, with a \$200 deductible.

Retirees could elect to keep Blue Million — if they picked up the monthly difference in premium.

Roger Fox — who retired from the town in 1990 after 31 years of service — now pays \$107 per month to keep his Blue Million insurance.

Ameila Fontana, who took the Blue Choice Senior plan, now pays \$179 for a three-month supply of one of her prescription drugs.

She used to pay \$21. "This plan is just not what we thought we were going to get when we retired," she said. □