

Trial dates scheduled in priest abuse lawsuits

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GENEVA – As attorneys continue work to settle two local sex-abuse lawsuits connected to a convicted former priest, trial dates were scheduled for next year in the cases.

Attorney Michael Brooks, who represents the two girls – now young women – said he would meet with attorneys for the Rockford Diocese in February for a mediation session.

"If we don't reach an agreement during mediation, presumably the assumption is to push on to trial," Brooks said.

Trial dates of Oct. 22 and Nov. 5 were scheduled during a Tuesday hearing.

Former priest Mark Campobello is serving an eight-year prison sentence at Illinois River Correctional Facility for his 2004 conviction on charges that he sexually abused the two girls.

A default judgment was ordered against Campobello in 2004 after he failed to respond to the lawsuits.

The lawsuits also name the Rockford Diocese and Bishop Thomas Doran, alleging that there were no background checks into Campobello before he was hired to work at St. Peter Catholic Church in Geneva and at Aurora Central Catholic High School.

The diocese has denied any wrongdoing.

Campobello completed depositions from prison last month, and St. Peter Monsignor Joe Jarmoluk is scheduled to give depositions next month, Brooks said.

Both sides will return to court March 20 to report the progress of the mediation to Circuit Judge Keith Brown.

The cases, filed 2 1/2 years ago, were delayed when attorneys for the diocese resisted in handing over priest records that date back decades.

Earlier this year, Brown ordered that the records be turned over and that they be sealed.

Attorneys for the girls asked for the records to see how the diocese handled allegations of abuse in the past.

Until the records were sealed, there were few depositions in the case.

Doran remains hospitalized and in good condition at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. He was admitted after an exam revealed that he had cancerous tumors and underwent lung surgery, diocese officials said Monday.

Doran is expected to make a full recovery.