

Sentinel & Enterprise

Grand jury fails to indict officer

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Updated: 01/07/2010 08:48:29 AM EST

FITCHBURG -- The case against Robert Soroka, the former Fitchburg police officer charged with rape in 2008, will not go forward in Central District Court in Worcester, after a grand jury failed to indict him on Dec. 23.

"Evidence was presented to the Worcester County grand jury, and they declined to indict, so the case is over," said Timothy Connolly, spokesman for Worcester District Attorney Joseph Early.

Connolly added that Early's office will likely file a motion to close the case in district court, after a meeting with Soroka's defense attorney Edward Ryan.

"The outcome is very good and now he looks forward to getting his life back on track and trying to recover on this false allegation," said Ryan.

Soroka could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Soroka, then 28, was arrested by Fitchburg police in June 2008, and charged in Fitchburg District Court with raping a 28-year-old Fitchburg woman at a local social event. The case was later moved to Central District Court in Worcester.

Soroka, who was hired as a Fitchburg police officer in September 2006, was slated to be laid off due to budget cuts at the time of his arrest, though he was also put on unpaid leave as a result of his charges, a spokesman for the city said.

"It's clear that when the case was presented to the grand jury, they were not impressed, and made a judgment that there was insufficient evidence of any wrong doing, and acted accordingly," Ryan said.

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"It is a shame that Mr. Soroka's position with the Fitchburg Police Department was terminated simply as a result of a false allegation."

But Bernie Stevens, the human resources director for the city of Fitchburg, said Soroka's current employment status is "laid-off," which means his name is on a list of officers who

Police Department officials will have to consider the next time hiring is done as mandated by Civil Service regulations.

The Civil Service Commission, a quasi-judicial agency, regulates most of the job positions within the Fitchburg Police Department, he said.

Police Chief Robert DeMoura did not return phone calls for comment on Wednesday.

Police union President Christopher Garcia said Soroka should be the next in line to fill an open position, and added that he had no opinion on the status of Soroka's rape case.

"I'm not familiar with the case, but I do believe (Soroka) deserves his due process for civil service," said Garcia.

Police Sgt. Glenn Fossa of the Fitchburg Police Department said it was premature to discuss the possibility of Soroka being rehired.

"It would be speculation at best for anybody at this point to say whether a hiring situation exists, whether we are hiring from that list, and whether we have any concerns in general," said Fossa.

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