

Judge's disciplinary case starts

Franklin County's Squire accused of berating lawyers

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THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

A disciplinary hearing for a Franklin County juvenile court judge opened yesterday with allegations that the judge mishandled cases, delayed hearings and berated attorneys.

During a custody-dispute hearing in November 2003, Judge Carole Squire tossed a law book on a table, shook her finger at attorney Lorie McCaughan and ordered her to find a section of the state law, according to testimony from Columbus lawyer Jennifer Thompson.

Squire yelled at McCaughan, "You need to find this. You're nothing but a liar," Thompson

testified.

Thompson and McCaughan were jointly representing a woman and wanted Squire to issue a protection order against her former boyfriend.

"I'm not going to make a decision and if you don't like it, you can appeal me," McCaughan testified that Squire said.

Squire is charged with four counts of misconduct, including abusing the rights of people who came before her, failing to follow the law and violating judicial rules. Yesterday was the first day of her hearing before the Ohio Supreme Court's disciplinary board.

Squire's attorney, Kim Riley, denied the charges. Although Squire juggled a lengthy docket of cases, she always was professional, Riley said.

"She treated every child before her as if it were one of her children," Riley said

She "acted as any reasonable judge would have. Judges are only human. They have good days and bad," Riley said.

McCaughan and Thompson testified that Squire took too long to decide on the protection-order request and refused to allow a court stenographer to record hearings on the matter.

McCaughan eventually went to the state court of appeals, which required Squire to have the hearings publicly recorded.

Frustrated by the lack of action in the custody-dispute case, McCaughan requested an emergency temporary-custody order so her client's 8-year-old daughter could be with her mother.

That was granted by Franklin County Juvenile Court Judge Dana Preisse, which angered Squire, McCaughan testified.

On Nov. 7, 2003, Squire lashed out, according to testimony.

While Squire was standing outside her courtroom, she grabbed the 8-year-old girl, pulled her aside and fired back at the attorneys.

"She looked at us and screamed, 'No, no, no,'" Thompson testified. "I was just kind of in shock."

Squire also is accused of calling the office of Dr. Ronald Fleming on June 14, 2004, and threatening to have police bring Fleming to a divorce hearing. Squire later said she never ordered him to be present.

Squire threatened both of Fleming's attorneys with contempt, according to the complaint filed by Lori J. Brown, an attorney for Disciplinary Counsel Jonathan E. Coughlan.

Squire could face a penalty ranging from a public reprimand to loss of her law license.

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