

Charges against officer dropped

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Staff Writers

Criminal charges against a Minneapolis police officer accused of sexual contact with a 15-year-old girl were dropped Tuesday. But internal disciplinary action remains possible.

The charges were dropped as the trial of Patrick E. Kiely, 34, a patrol officer in the north side Fourth Precinct, was to begin. Assistant Hennepin County Attorney James Goffney said that the prosecution didn't have enough evidence to prove its case.

But Police Chief Anthony Bouza said he will convene a formal disciplinary hearing. Bouza said that the county attorney's office was "altogether too timid" in its case.

Kiely's attorney, Bill Maury, said that "very, very serious questions" had been raised about the credibility of the girl. She first denied that the incident had taken place, he said, nearly six months passed before charges were filed. Moreover, he said, her story varied in different villages.

Bouza responded: "It's a lousable case. It's also a winnable case. I just hate to have these things decided on the basis of batting averages."

Bouza said that the girl was considered credible enough that similar "fictitious" charges were brought against two adults with whom she was sexually involved last December. The incident occurred the night before the alleged incident involving Kiely; both adults pleaded guilty to third-degree criminal sexual conduct without seeking a jury trial.

But Maury said, "Her credibility is not tested when there is a guilty plea." He said Kiely submitted to and passed a lie detector test, and that he "adamantly and earnestly told me and others he was innocent."

The complaint against Kiely alleged sexual contact with the girl and a 25-year-old woman at a north Minneapolis home. Kiely, a 10-year veteran with the department, was not on duty at the time. He knew the girl through her school, where he worked part-time as a hall monitor. He has since resigned his job at the school.

Maury described Kiely as a good officer with a distinguished and unblemished record. "I hope that the third charge would not have any effect on him as a police officer," he said. Kiely could not be reached for comment.



Patrick Kiely

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Fri, Jul 16, 2021