

# Millard enters not guilty plea

Local judges disqualify themselves from hearing case

By RYAN SMITH  
News Tribune

Jefferson City funeral director Reid Millard pleaded not guilty to a statutory sodomy charge and all Cole County circuit judges disqualified themselves from the case during an arraignment hearing Wednesday morning.

Following Millard's plea, Presiding Judge Thomas J. Brown III granted the county prosecutor's motion to disqualify him from hearing the case, and said the state Supreme Court would appoint a special judge.

The Cole County judges were disqualified "because of the conflict all the judges feel they have," Brown told one of Millard's lawyers Wednesday.

For now, both parties must wait to see what the Supreme Court will decide.

"We are in a holding pattern until the Supreme Court appoints a judge to sit on this case," said Prosecutor Bill Tackett. "Once that occurs, this case can be addressed at a circuit court level."

Tackett's office filed the application to disqualify Brown from the case Jan. 9. The application notes that Millard was a chairperson for the Citizens for Law Enforcement Center, a group that supported last year's failed Justice Center proposal, for which Brown was a "prominent advocate."

The application states "a reasonable person" knowing the connection "would have factual grounds to find the appearance of impropriety or lack of impartiality" if Brown continued as the trial judge in the case.

J.R. Hobbs, Millard's defense attorney, filed a responding suggestion Wednesday in opposition of the application to disqualify Brown.

Millard's attorneys still have the right to file a change of venue motion.

If convicted of the statutory sodomy charge, Millard would have to be listed as a registered sex offender and he could be sentenced to a term of up to seven years in prison.

The 46-year old director of Houser-Millard

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## ★ Plea

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Funeral Directors is accused of having "deviate sexual intercourse" with a 16-year-old boy at

his Apple Creek Farm residence near Centertown on Aug. 28, 2005.

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