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The Times-Picayune

Judge to rule on unsealing records

Jeff councilman's divorce under wraps

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By Richard Rainey
East Jefferson bureau

The secrecy surrounding the divorce case of Jefferson Parish Councilman John Young and former television personality Mary Lou McCall now rests on a half-dozen court documents.

Judge Robert Pitre Jr. of the 24th District Court in Gretna said Wednesday he will rule in the next few days whether to open these records, or certain details in them, to the public. Pitre's review puts all sealed court records connected to the case in limbo until his final ruling, although his narrow focus on only six documents out of more than 200 suggests the rest will be opened.

Records of the divorce, which became final three days before Hurricane Katrina hit, have been kept from public scrutiny since the court honored Young's request in 2004 to keep the proceedings private. The Times-Picayune contested that decision this month.

The newspaper intervened after McCall filed a police report May 25 accusing state Sen. Julie Quinn, R-Metairie, of slapping the youngest son of McCall and Young. Quinn, who denies hitting the boy, has been dating Young since last fall. Her own contentious divorce from New Orleans hotelier Patrick Quinn became final in March.

Young did not object to unsealing the court records.

McCall's attorney, Lee Rand, asked Pitre to keep six documents private. They include Young's original divorce filing in October 2004, McCall's answer to it, a motion for continuance, two contempt rulings in July 2005 and in April and a July 29, 2005, court transcript. Rand said these documents "contained graphic and inflammatory allegations" that could embarrass everyone involved.

Jim Swanson, an attorney for the newspaper, argued that full disclosure of the pleadings is necessary to bring proper context to stories that The Times-Picayune has published about Young and McCall. The newspaper has also written about Quinn's relationship with Young and her ex-husband's alleged violations of a restraining order.

The Quinns have two sons, ages 5 and 7.

Pitre said his greatest concern is the welfare of Young and McCall's children, five boys, ranging in age from 8 to 21.

Young did not attend Wednesday's hearing. McCall, accompanied by her new husband, Noel Allen, arrived at the courthouse after the hearing concluded.

"Just be kind, for the children," she said, after a reporter relayed the outcome to her.

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Richard Rainey can be reached at rrainey@timespicayune.com or (504) 883-7052.