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Judge declares mistrial in second day of Rumney post office shooting trial

Staff Report
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Dean R. Kenneson, left, and his attorney Ted Lothstein at the start of his assault trial Monday in Grafton County Superior Court.

John Koziol/Union Leader Correspondent

A judge scrapped the Rumney post office shooting trial this week after a witness blurted out an accusation against the defendant, his defense lawyer said.

The mistrial means that Campton resident Dean R. Kenneson, 73, will have to face another jury on charges of first-degree assault.

Kenneson is accused of shooting Jacob Sanborn, the nephew of Kenneson's long-term girlfriend, in the post office parking lot in March 2022.

"(Kenneson) continues to assert his innocence and looks forward to another opportunity to clear his name before a fair, impartial jury," attorney Ted Lothstein wrote in an email.

The problem surfaced on Tuesday, the second day of the trial in Grafton County Superior Court.

A witness testified that Sanborn yelled at the post office that Kenneson had abused Sanborn's aunt, Sandra Poitras. In pretrial rulings, Judge Lawrence MacLeod had forbade any such allegations from surfacing at trial.

Lothstein said the domestic violence accusation would unfairly hurt his client in the eyes of the jury.

"Mr. Kenneson had no way of defending himself against what the witness said and clearing his name, since Sandra Poitras passed away years ago," Lothstein said.

According to opening statements at trial, the shooting took place during a confrontation between Sanborn and Kenneson at the post office.

Sanborn was in the older man's face and threatening to beat him, according to statements.

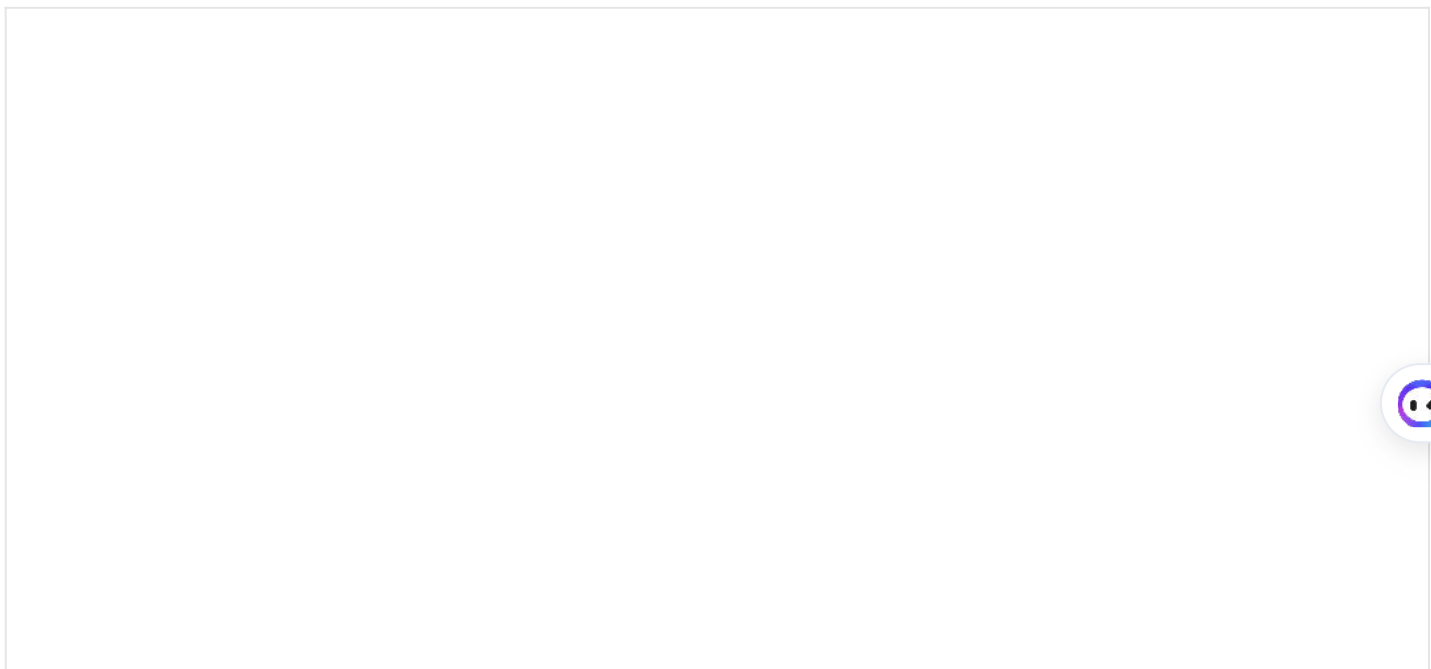
Sanborn was shot in the back but returned to work as a carpenter the next day. Lothstein said Kenneson acted in self-defense and cited New Hampshire stand-your-ground law, which does not require a person to safely retreat before using deadly force.

The prosecution have said long-standing animosity existed between the two.

Another jury will have to be picked for a new trial, and MacLeod did not set a date, Lothstein said.

Kenneson faces felony charges of first-degree assault, second-degree assault and reckless conduct. He remains free on bail.

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Mark Hayward

