

Sexual Assault Charge to go to Trial

Written by

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Pre-trial negotiations have been scheduled for September 12 in a case involving former Watauga County Sheriff Mark Shook.

A sexual harassment case against Shook, filed by former chief deputy Paula Townsend, could go to trial in Statesville on October 1 if a settlement is not reached.

Townsend submitted an initial complaint to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission within a month of losing her job in July of 2005. Townsend filed the lawsuit in 2006. In it, Shook is accused of sexual harassment, gender discrimination, disparate treatment, retaliation and hostile work environment. Townsend also named Watauga County in the lawsuit, insisting that county officials knew what was going on and allowed the harassment to happen.

Shook, who continues to proclaim his innocence, alleges the lawsuit caused him to lose the 2006 election. He has filed a counter claim of defamation against Townsend.