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Minister Arrested in Alleged Bribery Plot in Molestation Case

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Reviving a controversy that seemed to end weeks ago, police on Monday arrested a Newport Beach minister who they say tried to bribe the family of a teenage girl to change her testimony against a neurosurgeon who was accused of sexual molestation.

Held on \$100,000 bail on suspicion of offering to make a \$36,000 bribe was Fred Kenton Beshore, 63, who is listed in state records as president and registered agent of the First Baptist Church of Newport Beach. Police said they know of no motive for the alleged bribery scheme.

Neurosurgeon Frank J. Williams of Newport Beach was accused late last year of using his medical practice to molest several patients. Williams denied the charges, and early this month a judge found the doctor's treatment of patients to be proper and refused to order him to stand trial.

But on Monday, county prosecutors were in court showing a judge previously suppressed videotapes—seized from Williams' Newport Beach office—in an attempt to use the tapes as evidence against the doctor.

The timing of the day's developments appeared to be a coincidence. But the events combined to send an unmistakable signal that Williams' legal problems did not end Feb. 2 when Municipal Judge Susan S. Shaw threw out the charges against him.

In her ruling earlier this month, the judge also warned Williams against videotaping his office visits, a practice the doctor described as a malpractice safeguard. "They're going to use that against you," Shaw advised.

The judge's remarks proved prescient Monday as members of the district attorney's office tried to persuade Superior Court Judge David O. Carter to allow them to use as evidence some or all of the 400 videotapes seized from Williams. Prosecutors had been barred from introducing the tapes—under court seal—at Williams' recent preliminary hearing.

The videotapes—reportedly showing Williams in the office with his patients—"are very significant and necessary to our investigation," said Lt. Tim Newman of the Newport Beach Police Department.

Judge Carter, meeting in private conference with Williams' attorney and county prosecutors, began watching the tapes in mid-afternoon and was expected to continue through midnight in hopes of finishing the task.

A hearing may be held later this week on whether the tapes should be allowed into evidence. If they are allowed, prosecutors may refile the molestation charges against Williams.

Williams could not be reached Monday through his office or home to comment on the developments. And his attorney, Byron K. McMillan, refused to discuss the case, a secretary said.

Both Williams and the attorney have previously denied that the doctor did anything wrong and characterized him as the victim of overzealous prosecutors who built their case on the word of one troubled girl.

Williams was initially alleged to have molested a 26-year-old woman and a 12-year-old girl during pelvic and breast examinations. It was the 12-year-old girl whose testimony Beshore was accused Monday of trying to influence.

Police, who arrested Beshore at his home without incident, charged that the minister offered to pay the girl's father a total of \$36,000 over 2 years if she would change her testimony against Williams. Beshore remained Monday night at the Newport Beach City Jail.

The father, a former Irvine pastor who now lives with his daughter in Kentucky, refused the repeated offers and contacted Orange County authorities in December, police said.

Several of Beshore's neighbors said Monday that they did not know the man well because he was often traveling to foreign countries as part of his ministry. His family in Newport Beach could not be reached for comment on the arrest.

Records on file with the Secretary of State's office show Beshore listed as president and registered agent of the First Baptist Church of Newport Beach and president and registered agent the World Bible Society in Newport Beach. Beshore is also described as a minister of the Bible Institute of the Air.