
No plea deal for former Forest Hill funeral home operator - yet

By Lawrence Buser

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An anticipated guilty plea by Clayton Smart did not materialize this morning in court, where he is accused of stealing millions of dollars from trust funds at the Forest Hill funeral businesses.

Instead, Smart, 70, and former business partner and co-defendant Stephen W. Smith, 63, asked for new court dates from Criminal Court Judge W. Otis Higgs Jr., who reset their cases for May 13.

Attorneys for the two men did not rule out a negotiated plea, but said today was not the day.

Smart, Smith and former Smith Barney investment adviser Mark Singer are charged with 16 criminal counts that include conspiracy, theft and money laundering.

Singer's trial began two weeks ago and could take up to three more weeks. He is being tried on one count of conspiracy, one count of theft and five counts of money laundering.

Smith and Singer, 44, are free on bonds, but Smart, who also faces related charges in Michigan and federal charges, has been in jail for the past three years.



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