

Trial date set in WVU alumni center lawsuit

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A Monongalia County judge has set a December trial date in a lawsuit that alleges the bidding process for West Virginia University's new alumni center was unfair.

Judge Russell Clawges on Monday set trial for the week of Dec. 4, according to Vince Trivelli, a Morgantown attorney for the Affiliated Construction Trades Foundation.

The ACT Foundation filed the lawsuit April 19, alleging that state-funded WVU was paying for parts of the construction. State law requires that a public bidding process be used to select construction companies for public projects.

The WVU Alumni Association, a private organization, is leasing the property from WVU, where the center is being built in Morgantown. Officials with the Alumni Association have said the project is completely funded by private contributions.

Clawges also decided to hear both sides' motions for summary judgment on Oct. 9, Trivelli said.

Steve White, the ACT Foundation's executive director, said Clawges also has ordered a mandatory mediation, where each side discusses the issue with an independent third party to help resolve the lawsuit outside court.

"The judge really urged both sides to work it out," White said.

Clawges ruled in August that the alumni association could continue building the new center on WVU's Evansdale Campus. Officials with the ACT Foundation filed a motion in July seeking an injunction.

The new center is under construction on WVU-owned land and leased to the association, according to Tara Curtis, the alumni association's assistant director.

Because the land is leased from the university, it is not a state construction project, WVU spokeswoman Janey Cink has said.

White has said WVU's support includes site preparation and work on the new building's structural foundation.

Curtis has said WVU's work on that site is not related to the new alumni center. The work is to build a detention pond for storm runoff, she has said.