

TRUMBULL COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

Dennis Watkins, Prosecutor
Repeat Violent Offenders newsletter
UPDATE: September 26, 2024

Former Warren officer gets 34 to 39 years in prison



A former Warren police officer on Sept. 26, 2024, received an indeterminate sentence of 34 to 39 years in prison and was labeled a Tier 3 sexual offender after being found guilty earlier this week by a Trumbull County jury of 15 charges including two first-degree rape with firearm specifications, four gross sexual impositions with firearm specifications, three counts of sexual battery with firearm specifications, two counts extortion, two counts theft in office and two counts dereliction of duty.

The jury deliberated almost 15 hours over three days before returning the verdicts on Monday afternoon, Sept. 23. The jury also found Michael Edwards Jr., 44, not guilty of six other rape counts, one count of menacing by stalking and one count gross sexual imposition.

Some six victims testified at trial, and one of them spoke at the sentencing hearing before Judge Cynthia Rice about how Edwards' breach of trust and betrayal had left her feeling isolated and disillusioned about "the systems which are supposed to offer safety."

Judge Rice labeled Edwards a Tier 3 sex offender which requires a lifetime registration but fell short of declaring him a sexually violent predator. The judge said the evidence at trial did not show Edwards acted violently or threatened violence in his acts.

Assistant Prosecutor Gabriel Wildman, who tried the case with Assistant Prosecutor Gina Thomas, said he was pleased with the outcome.

"I think today the judge really laid down the law," Wildman said. "The victims were pleased with the results (of the trial) and the sentence."

Defense attorney David Betras spoke on behalf of his client, who Betras said maintained his innocence. Betras said Edwards realized the shame he had brought on his former fellow officers and the city of Warren.

Edwards, who chose not to speak at sentencing, was dismissed as a police officer after one of the victims came forward with charges in January 2024. Six victims testified against him at trial last week.

For more information, contact Guy M. Vogrin, investigator and public information officer of the Trumbull County Prosecutor's Office at 330-675-2485.