



Ground Zero Mosque Lawsuit Ruling Condo Could Come Next Month, Judge Says

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Lawyers for both sides made their arguments in court Tuesday.



The planned location of the Park51 mosque and community center, at 45-51 Park Place.

By Julie Shapiro

DNAinfo Reporter/Producer

LOWER MANHATTAN — The legal dispute over the mosque near Ground Zero may soon be over.

A conservative group representing a 9/11 firefighter has been trying for months to derail the Park51 mosque and community center by challenging the city's decision to allow the project to move forward.

Judge Paul Feinman said during a hearing Tuesday that he will issue a decision as soon as next month, according to two people who attended.

The American Center for Law and Justice sued the city and Park51's developers last year after the city Landmarks Preservation Commission voted not to block the mosque by landmarking an existing building on the site. That building, 45-47 Park Place, was hit by landing gear from one of the planes on 9/11.

Brett Joshpe, lawyer for the ACLJ, argued Tuesday that the building is historically significant because of the 9/11 damage and should have been landmarked. He accused Mayor Michael Bloomberg of politicizing the vote through his support of the mosque project.

But lawyers for the city and Park51 argued Tuesday that there is nothing special about 45-47 Park Place, since dozens of buildings were hit with debris on 9/11 and none of them have been landmarked as a result.

Joshpe said he was pleased that the hour-long hearing delved into the building's connection to 9/11.

"I thought the judge was fair," Joshpe said afterward. "He had clearly read the papers in advance, and he seemed receptive to our arguments."

Adam Leitman Bailey, who represents Park51, said he, too, anticipated a positive outcome.

"We are looking forward to our client having the legal ability to build his community center and for all Americans to have the right to pray wherever, whenever and how they want to pray," **Bailey** said in an e-mail.