



STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE/IRVING SILVERSTEIN

Robert Kim declined to comment as he left court with his mother and wife, Lisa.

Sex abuse charges dropped against karate instructor

He does plead guilty to disorderly conduct and must pay a fine

By MICHELLE MASKALY
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

Sexual abuse charges have been dropped against popular Staten Island karate teacher Robert Kim, who a year ago was accused of molesting two teen-age girls on numerous occasions.

But Kim did plead guilty yesterday, before Judge Johnny Lee Baynes in Stapleton Criminal Court, to disorderly conduct in connection with the March 2005 arrest and charges.

"He is relieved," said Kim's Manhattan attorney, Joseph Tacopina, outside the court-

house, after Kim paid a fine.

Kim, a fifth-degree black belt in tae kwon do, is co-owner of Dragon Kim's Karate USA in New Dorp.

The case was transferred to the Brooklyn district attorney's office because of a perceived conflict of interest on Staten Island, since Kim's family is a donor to the Republican Party, which numbers among its elected officials District Attorney Daniel Donovan.

Kevin O'Donnell, who prosecuted the case, declined to comment on the charges and referred all questions about the case to the press office.

Jerry Schmetterer, a spokesman for the Brooklyn district attorney, said the ac-

SEE KARATE, PAGE A 6

Charges against instructor dropped

users and their families agreed to the lesser charge to avoid the rigors of a trial.

Tacopina had steadily maintained his client's innocence.

"We knew from the beginning he never harmed these girls," contended Tacopina, who said the disorderly conduct charges did not concern the two former students who lodged the accusations

against Kim.

When he took on the case last year, Tacopina told the Advance his telephone was ringing off the hook with neighbors and students wanting to support his client.

The 36-year-old Old Bridge, N.J., resident, wearing a black suit with his hair pulled into a ponytail, declined to comment on the case as he walked to a white SUV

with his arm wrapped around the waist of his wife, Lisa.

Kim's father is Jhong Uhk Kim, a ninth-degree black belt who opened Dragon Kim's Karate USA more than 20 years ago. Currently, there are eight dojo locations, including three on the Island.

Jhong Uhk Kim is president of the borough's Korean-American Association and owner of the IHOP restaurant in Graniteville. He has a record of donations to the Republican Party.

Michelle Maskaly is a news reporter for the Advance. She may be reached at maskaly@siadvance.com.