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Investors get few answers Health club owner skirts questions

By ROBERT GREEN
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ROCKFORD - Confronted by angry creditors and two state assistant attorneys general, Ronald Bosse refused to say what happened to almost \$200,000 invested in the defunct McHenry County Health Club.

"What did you do with the money?," demanded an elderly McHenry man who bought \$2,400 worth of stock.

About 20 other investors at the bankruptcy hearing Tuesday had the same question but, on the advice of his attorney, Bosse refused to say what happened to the money.

The Illinois Attorney General's Office, however, which has called the health club a "scam" and a "rip-off," isn't taking "no comment" for an answer.

After questioning Bosse for about 20 minutes and getting few answers, the two assistant attorneys general left to file a motion in federal bankruptcy court that they hope will reactivate a state suit charging, Bosse with consumer fraud and securities violations.

"It's, so we can go ahead with action in state court and get as much relief as possible," said Assistant Attorney General **Lawrence LaSusa**.

Attorney General Neil Hartigan filed the fraud suit against Bosse in April but it has been stymied because Bosse filed for bankruptcy protection five days previous. More than 600 creditors are listed on Bosse's bankruptcy petition, although the attorney general believes as many as 1,500 people bought advance memberships or stock in the health club.

LaSusa said if the motion to have the matter heard in McHenry County court is not granted, the attorney general's office will pursue the matter in bankruptcy court. It is illegal to file for bankruptcy when fraud is involved. The attorney general's suit charges that Bosse failed to keep investors' money safe in an escrow account at a McHenry bank, as he had promised.

When pressed by LaSusa, Bosse acknowledged that he has all of the health club's financial records, including bank statements and canceled checks, but no records were brought to the meeting Tuesday.

Bosse said some of the records are in the hands of attorneys, but he told LaSusa he couldn't recall any of the attorneys he retained between 1985 and 1988.

Bankruptcy court trustee Bernard Natale ordered Bosse to bring all financial records to the next meeting of creditors, the date of which has not been set.

The proposed health club never got past a groundbreaking ceremony last June. Shortly afterward, Bosse closed the health club trailer-office, disconnected the telephone and became evasive when investors and members asked how the health club was progressing.

Bosse now operates a tanning and exercise salon on Route 31 near where the health club would have been built.