

Salvation Army can be asked about thrift store finances

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Salvation Army officials can be asked in a deposition about the agency's net worth as well as the profitability of the thrift store at 22nd and Market Streets that collapsed in June 2013, Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Judge Mark Bernstein ruled during a hearing Monday.

Sept. 6 is scheduled as the start date for a civil trial that consolidates 20 lawsuits stemming from the collapse. Six people were killed and 13 injured when the unsupported masonry wall of a four-story building that was being demolished toppled and flattened the adjoining store.

Griffin Campbell, 51, a North Philadelphia demolition contractor, was sentenced last month to 15 to 30 years in prison for his role in the collapse. Sean Benschop, 44, the excavator operator Campbell hired to

Take down the wall, was sentenced to 7 1/2 to 15 years.

Attorney Andrew Stern, who represents Mariya Plekan, who lost both legs in the collapse, said in court Monday that the Salvation Army "present themselves like a benevolent charity, but they are a business with an \$11 billion net worth," similar, he said, to Nike.

He added that the thrift store was kept open during the demolition because the Salvation Army feared "they'd lose profits." He said the store was the Salvation Army's "most profitable."

Salvation Army attorney Joseph Gorman said he planned to file a motion in April that will dispute Stern's allegations. He questioned the relevance of the profits of the store.