

SMITHFIELD -- On Tuesday, a Superior Court judge refused to block a schoolteacher's extradition to Virginia.

"We have an indictment affidavit saying that she committed the crime under the law of that state," said Judge Knox V. Jenkins.

Marcia C. Grimsley, 56, of Clayton was arrested Aug. 6 during a teacher workday at McGee's Crossroads Elementary School. Since then, the first-grade teacher has been in the Johnston County jail awaiting her extradition hearing.

Prosecutors in New Kent County, Va., want to try Grimsley for conspiring with her son to kill Amy Ashford, her former daughter-in-law. In July, a Virginia grand jury indicted Grimsley on two charges -- attempted capital murder for hire and conspiracy to commit murder for hire.

Grimsley's son, David Ashford, 40, of Holly Springs, is serving 40 years in a Virginia prison for the same crimes. If convicted, Grimsley could spend 20 years to life in prison.

During the extradition hearing on Tuesday, Grimsley's attorney, Bob Denning of Selma, told the judge that his client wanted him off the case. "Mrs. Grimsley has accused me of being in cahoots with the District Attorney's Office," Denning said. "She has accused me of not acting in her best interest and of being in conspiracy with the DA's Office."

Still, Denning tried to fight his client's extradition, presenting a psychiatric evaluation of Grimsley. But Jenkins said Grimsley's mental state had no bearing on extradition. "This [evaluation] concerns her competency to stand trial," the judge told Denning. "This is not a trial; this is an extradition hearing."

In supporting extradition, District Attorney Tom Lock noted that the governors of North Carolina and Virginia wanted Grimsley tried in New Kent County. Jenkins agreed that North Carolina had no jurisdiction in the case, and the judge said it did not matter that Grimsley was never in Virginia. On Wednesday, Linwood Gregory, the chief prosecutor in New Kent County, said Ashford had been helpful in building the state's case against her former mother-in-law. "It's been hard on her, but she has assisted us," Gregory said. "She just wants to get on with her life and not have to look over her shoulder anymore."

Since her arrest, Grimsley has remained jailed under a \$1 million bond, which Jenkins has twice refused to lower. It's likely Grimsley will face a similarly high bond in Virginia, Gregory said. "I don't see that changing a lot when she gets here," he said.

In court this week, Grimsley appeared tired. She wore civilian clothes and no shackles, but three jailers were always near her. With nine family members and friends in the courtroom, Grimsley asked to speak, but Jenkins denied her request.

After the hearing, Grimsley's family members refused to talk to the media, but a neighbor who gave only her first name, Sharon, said she was sad. "She is a friend of mine," the neighbor said of Grimsley. "I've known Marcia for three years, and I do not feel in my heart that these charges are warranted."

Sharon said she had visited Grimsley in jail. "It was very hard," Sharon said. "She takes it very hard, and she wasn't doing very well in there."

Jenkins signed the extradition papers on Wednesday, and Sgt. Charles Gardner of the New Kent Sheriff's Department said authorities hoped to have Grimsley in Virginia by week's end. "We are very ready to get this over with," he said.

Gregory said he was ready too. "I'll be glad to put this case behind me," he said. "I'm hoping that we'll be able to start trial as soon as possible. I'm guessing we'll be able to start between now and mid-December."