



# Office of the Washington County Attorney

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Kevin Magnuson, County Attorney

## News Release

**Contact:** Amanda Moore, Criminal Analyst

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date: August 13, 2025**

### **Cottage Grove man sentenced to prison for sexually abusing young girl**

**STILLWATER, Minn.** — A man who sexually abused a seven-year-old girl more than two decades ago was sentenced to 98 months in prison, Washington County Attorney Kevin Magnuson announced. Martin Zappa pleaded guilty to first-degree criminal sexual conduct as a jury trial was about to begin in March. On August 1, Judge Helen Brosnahan denied Zappa's request for a departure from the sentencing guidelines and sentenced him to 98 months in prison, a presumptive sentence under the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines at the time of the crime.

The victim reported Zappa's abuse in December 2021. Because of the impact of associated trauma, it can often take years for victims to come forward, particularly when the victim is a child, and the abuser is a relative or friend of the family. Here, the victim reported that Zappa, who was then her neighbor, invited her into his home, where he groomed her extensively before sexually abusing her for over three years. Zappa was about 40 years old at the time of the abuse.

The Cottage Grove Police Department investigated the victim's reports and built a strong case. As the trial was beginning, Judge Brosnahan ruled that a woman who Zappa was convicted of sexually assaulting in 1999 would be able to testify about Zappa's sexual abuse of her. The case was prosecuted by Assistant County Attorney Thomas Wedes, who is hopeful that Zappa's conviction and sentence provides closure and justice for a victim who has waited so long.

County Attorney Kevin Magnuson said, "This case reminds us that victims of criminal sexual conduct sometimes take time to fully understand and process the trauma they have endured. We know how difficult it is for victims to come forward and relive these horrible events. We are grateful for the victim's courage in testifying. I also want to thank the trial team for their commitment and skill in preparing this case for trial."

"The Washington County Attorney's Office places a high priority on prosecuting sexual predators and ensuring the safety of the public", Magnuson said. "When victims are ready to come forward, no matter how long it has been since their abuse, we will be there to listen and to help. When the evidence allows, we will file criminal charges and we will hold the perpetrators accountable."



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In addition to the 98-month prison sentence, Zappa must register as a predatory offender for the rest of his life. Restitution was reserved for 90 days.

A person who committed the same crime today would face more prison time than Zappa received, but courts are required to use the version of the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines in effect at the time of the crime. Zappa's sentence is a presumptive sentence based on the sentencing guidelines in effect at the time of the crime.

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