

Saddle River deer hunt put on hold

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SADDLE RIVER – An animal protection group is expected on Tuesday to challenge the start of deer culling in the borough, telling a judge that the group hired to do the work is not following contractual procedures.

A stay was granted by Superior Court Judge Lisa Perez Friscia over the weekend until the motion can be heard by Judge Christine Farrington in Bergen County on Tuesday.

Attorney Doris Lin said the culling began “late Thursday,” but that United Bowhunters of New Jersey “failed to submit their roster of hunters to the police department 30 days in advance, as required by their contract with the town.”

Lin said, “The roster was required so that police could do background checks on the hunters, and residents giving permission for their land to be hunted relied on this safety measure.”

The emergency motion claims the group was told in response to its public-records request for the list of hunters that “no such document exists.”

Borough Administrator Jerry Giamis called the complaint “patently false, as are other statements made by the attorney.”

“The emergency motion based on

that false information was filed after business hours on a holiday weekend, making it difficult for the borough to communicate with our legal counsel as to what documents were in our possession and how we are administering this lawfully passed program,” Giamis said.

“We will be in front of a judge Tuesday, at which time we will refute their assertions and provide all of the information the borough has to a judge.”

Giamis said the deer hunt “is consistent with all state laws regulating how municipalities are afforded the right to control of the deer population in the state of New Jersey.”

Council President Eric Jensen declined to comment. Borough Attorney Russell Huntington could not be reached for comment.

Lin represents three members of the Animal Protection League of New Jersey, six Saddle River residents and two Upper Saddle River residents who filed a joint complaint against the borough Sept. 10 challenging the borough’s attempt to thin deer herds in the borough.

The complaint seeks to nullify the contract with United Bowhunters and the borough’s wildlife management plan.

Saddle River Residents Against Bow Hunt posted photos on their Facebook page of a tent set up by the borough’s Department of Public Works and emer-

gency services building, “complete with a 2x4 A-frame and pulleys for hanging the deer” carcasses. Residents had expressed concern that the deer would be dressed where they were killed, rather than taken to another location.

Conflict over deer hunt

Residents remain conflicted about how the borough should handle its burgeoning deer population.

Borough residents voted in a November 2016 non-binding referendum to adopt a non-lethal deer management policy, by 715-457. However, a separate question on the same ballot authorizing lethal methods also passed, 582-544.

The borough’s animal control officer has said a “healthy deer density is 10 deer per square mile.” The borough’s 4.98 square miles are routinely traversed by herds of 40 to 50 deer at a time, traveling through the river’s tributaries and secluded yards.

Residents view bowhunting as less dangerous to residents, but some object on the premise that hunters may miss, sending wounded deer off to neighboring yards where permission to hunt has not been given. Firearms are viewed as more accurate, but also more lethal to residents.