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Attorneys spar during Aaron Hernandez civil hearing

Former Patriots tight end's lawyer claims he's running out of money



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Ursula Ward listens as her attorney speaks during a press conference in April to discuss a civil suit against Aaron Hernandez.

Brian Fraga Herald News Staff Reporter

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NEW BEDFORD — A hearing Thursday in Aaron Hernandez's wrongful death lawsuit in Bristol County turned uncivil, with attorneys sparring over each other's professionalism. The hearing also brought about a revelation from Hernandez's civil attorney: The former Patriots tight end is running out of money.

Hernandez's civil attorney, John D. Fitzpatrick, accused the attorneys representing Ursula Ward, the plaintiff and mother of Odin Lloyd, of misrepresenting facts, creating a media circus and trying to drag out the case.

"What plaintiff's counsel should be interested in is serving the interests of his client, who is a tragically bereaved mother of the deceased in this case. Instead of doing that, we have a plaintiff's counsel who holds press conferences, promising some kind of campaign to drag my client needlessly into court in chains for questioning, brilliant questioning no doubt, by plaintiff's counsel. It is preposterous," Fitzpatrick said.

A week after Hernandez's conviction for first-degree murder, attorney Douglas Sheff held a press conference in Boston with Ward. Sheff promised to call Hernandez to the witness stand in civil court, where the former New England Patriots star tight end would have to testify



because he could not invoke a Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination.

Fitzpatrick accused the Sheff Law firm of being unnecessarily contentious and making unfounded allegations. Fitzpatrick also said Ward's attorneys could bring the case to "an orderly resolution" by filing a summary judgement motion.

"Apparently plaintiff's counsel doesn't know the law, or at least is pretending that they don't know the law on this particular point," Fitzpatrick said.

Attorney Frank Federico, a partner at Sheff Law in Boston, took offense to Fitzpatrick's criticisms.

"We're representing a family that has suffered a tragic loss. They don't need the lawyer for the person who murdered the person to tell me how to do my job or tell my firm how to do my job. We know how to do our job. We're looking out for the Lloyd family's best interests. That's what we're trying to do here," Federico said.

"The allegations about distasteful, inappropriate comments that have been made by anyone in my office, I strongly deny that, for the record," Federico added.

On the matter of assets, Fitzpatrick told the court that Hernandez's only received a "fraction" of the \$40 million contract he signed with the Patriots in August 2012. Fitzpatrick said Hernandez has had to pay for a "platoon of lawyers" relating to his legal expenses, as well as supporting Jenkins and his daughter.

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