

Family gets extra time to leave farm seized by township

July 15, 2006, 1:42 PM EDT

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (AP) _ A judge is giving the family that owned a 75-acre farm at the heart of a political scandal some additional time to vacate their property.

State Superior Court Judge James Hurley, sitting in New Brunswick, gave the Halper family until noon Monday to leave their 75-acre Piscataway farm.

Hurley said Friday that he worried that "someone will get hurt" if uniformed officers are needed to clear the property.

The New Jersey Supreme Court in an eminent domain ruling had set a July 10 eviction date for the Halpers, who need to leave so Piscataway officials can start acquiring the land for eventual development into a park.

One of the Halpers' lawyers, Barbara Schwartz, told the judge during the Friday hearing that the family had moved all their possessions out of the home, but had been sleeping on air mattresses in the living room as they worked to remove agricultural equipment.

The judge said he would allow them until Friday to remove any remaining farm equipment.

The family has been involved in numerous disputes with the township, including over the price for the land. A Superior Court jury said the family deserved \$18 million in compensation for their land; the township has paid \$4.3 million but is appealing the \$18 million figure.

The disputes over the farm were at the heart of a political scandal that implicated former Gov. James McGreevey and led to the conviction of Democratic fundraiser David D'Amiano.

Prosecutors charged that D'Amiano demanded campaign donations from a Halper family member in exchange for helping him get a favorable offer from county officials for preservation rights to the farm.

Copyright 2006 Newsday Inc.