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Gun Board Decides To Halt Decisions

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MIDDLETOWN

The Board of Firearms Permit Examiners refused to hear any gun permit cases at its regular meeting Thursday, saying a lawsuit brought against the state police by one of its own board members may constitute a conflict of interest.

M. Peter Kuck, a member of the board, recently filed a federal lawsuit against the state police, claiming that his gun permit was not renewed in a timely manner and that he and others have had an average delay of 17 to 20 months to wait for a hearing.

In the suit, Kuck blames the state police Special License and Firearms unit for mismanagement, arrogance and attempting to create its own laws on gun permits.

The board's chairman, Christopher Adams, acknowledged that postponing October's meeting and the 12 cases scheduled would only add to the backlog, which he called a "serious problem." But in a four-page statement he read at the meeting, Adams said that "this is a situation that calls for extreme caution out of fairness for all involved."

Adams said the board would have to wait for an opinion from Attorney General Richard Blumenthal on what to do after Kuck sued the state police over the gun permit process, and whether Kuck should be allowed to continue to serve on the board.

Kuck, who had been secretary, was not re-elected to the position Thursday when the board voted for new officers.

Kuck's attorney, Rachel Baird, said the board and two state troopers are trying to remove Kuck from his position. "We have e-mails that they have been trying to get rid of him well before this," she said.

Adams said board members warned Kuck in September that the lawsuit "created a potential conflict of interest on his part, which might be used to call into question his impartiality in adjudicating claims."

Kuck, a member of Ye Connecticut Gun Guild Inc., submitted his application to the Department of



Public Safety to renew his permit on March 19, prior to its April 16 expiration date. But state police said he must submit a birth certificate or U.S. passport for the renewal, saying one of those forms of ID have been required for renewal since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Kuck says the state police firearms unit has abused its authority by punishing gun owners with long delays and making policies that have no basis in law.

Kuck's claims are echoed by James Goldberg of Glastonbury, who also plans to file a lawsuit over the long delay to get his gun permit back. Goldberg's permit was revoked after he was charged with breach of peace when a restaurant employee called police after seeing his gun under his shirt. The charges were dropped in court.

In a statement of his own, Kuck said that the lawsuit filed last month "is not about me, but about all the appellants who have sought relief from the board."

"As a member of the board and its secretary, my priority is to hear and decide the cases that have been prepared for presentation and are scheduled for hearing before the board today," he said.

The board's next meeting is scheduled Nov. 8.

Baird said the board has known since Sept. 18 about the lawsuit and questioned why it hadn't called a special meeting before Thursday to discuss the issue and vote to get the attorney general's guidance.

"They wait till Oct. 11 when everyone shows up. People paid their attorneys to be there," Baird said. "They staged this thing to turn public opinion against Peter Kuck for standing up for the rights of the appellants."

Attorney Ralph D. Sherman had several clients waiting for their hearing, who were turned away Thursday.

"They have already been waiting a year and a half," he said, adding that the delay would affect employment for at least one of his clients. "They are disappointed."

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