

Judge denies \$3M request by Jennifer Dulos' mother in civil suit

By Lisa Backus

A judge has denied Gloria Farber's bid to attach the assets of Fotis Dulos as her \$2.5 million lawsuit against him moved toward trial.

Attorney Richard Weinstein, representing Jennifer Dulos' mother, argued during the proceedings Friday in Hartford civil court for Judge Cesar Noble to increase a \$500,000 prejudgment remedy to \$3 million.

Weinstein said Fore Group tax returns from 2007 to 2016 indicated Fotis Dulos' company owed his client's late husband, Hilliard Farber, \$1.7 million. But Fotis Dulos later had the amount "converted" to equity to benefit himself in subsequent tax returns, Weinstein said.

"His children are the beneficiaries of that money," Weinstein said outside the courthouse.

Farber has been caring for



Gloria Farber's attorney, Richard Weinstein, leaves the Hartford courthouse on Friday.

the couple's five children since her daughter vanished on May 24. Fotis Dulos has been charged twice with tampering with evidence and hindering prosecution in the disappearance.

With his client Fotis Dulos sitting by his side, attorney William Murray successfully

argued Friday that a judge had already heard arguments in 2018 on a prejudgment remedy and set the amount at \$500,000.

"They already had a chance to argue this," Murray said.

Noble denied the request to increase the prejudgment

remedy and then pointed out that it was his goal to get the case ready for trial by December. As part of the push, most motions filed in the case will be provided to the judge in writing and decided outside of open court in part to avoid the extensive media coverage of the lawsuits, Murray said.

Fotis Dulos and Murray were dogged by television cameras and reporters as they left the courthouse Friday. Murray said the trial date may be pushed back, but didn't give an explanation as to why.

Weinstein said he believed Fotis Dulos was "systematically" disseminating his assets after the death of Farber's husband, who financially supported the Fore Group by loaning money so his son-in-law could build and sell high-end homes.

Murray contends there were no promissory notes or documents that would indicate the money was a loan.

"We are claiming that portions of that were forgiven," Murray said.

While Weinstein said Fotis Dulos has not paid child support or alimony since his wife filed for divorce in 2017, the 52-year-old posted a second \$500,000 bond this week when he was arrested on new tampering with evidence charges.

His criminal defense attorney

Norm Pattis declined to comment Friday on the source of the bond money. Fotis Dulos was required to put up about \$40,000 of the \$500,000 bond in order to be released.

The new charges against Fotis Dulos and Michelle Troconis, 44, stem from their efforts to clean up a Toyota Tacoma police believe was used in connection with Jennifer Dulos' disappearance, according to the latest arrest warrants. The truck belonged to a former Fore Group employee who told investigators Fotis Dulos ordered him to swap out the seats in the vehicle, according to the warrant. However, the employee kept the seats without Fotis Dulos knowing and turned them over to investigators who found Jennifer Dulos' blood on them, the warrant said.

Police believe Jennifer Dulos was the victim of a "serious physical assault" based on evidence found in the garage of her New Canaan home, the warrants state.

In an interview with Dateline NBC that airs Monday night, Fotis Dulos said he was not involved in his wife's disappearance and believes she's still alive.

Fotis Dulos and Troconis had previously pleaded not guilty to the original tampering with evidence and hindering prosecution charges. Those charges stem from Hartford

video surveillance that showed Fotis Dulos dumping garbage bags the night of his wife's disappearance, the warrant said. Police said the bags contained Jennifer Dulos' blood and her clothing.

Farber is suing Fotis Dulos for \$2.5 million in claims that he has failed to repay her family for business loans made to his real estate development company.

Weinstein was seeking a \$3 million prejudgment remedy in the lawsuits that would have required the assets of the Fore Group to be attached to ensure Farber receives the money if she wins the cases. Weinstein filed the request after examining Fotis Dulos' business and personal financial records.

Murray countered by asking a judge to require Farber to post a bond for the amount of any prejudgment remedy to ensure his client retains his business assets if he wins the lawsuits. Murray is claiming Weinstein's court motions, which include claims of financial wrongdoing by Fotis Dulos, have negatively affected his client's business.

In court papers filed July 31, Weinstein claimed the Fore Group's books show Fotis Dulos was paying "business expenses" with his personal accounts and then reimbursing himself through the company.

The expenses were "highly questionable" and include

reimbursements for Amazon, Home Goods, Target, thousands of dollars in gas, “various motels,” Uber and for a home office in his Farmington residence that he stopped paying the mortgage on months ago, Weinstein said.

Weinstein also claims Fotis Dulos hasn’t paid the mortgage on his Farmington home since 2018, causing Farber to pick up the payments.

After the proceedings on Friday, Noble ordered the consolidation of the two lawsuits Farber filed against Fotis Dulos and the Fore Group.

Since Jennifer Dulos vanished on May 24, the divorce proceedings and Farber’s civil lawsuits have become increasingly vitriolic with attorneys sparring with new court filings nearly every day.

Farber’s attorneys have accused Fotis Dulos of using his business accounts as his personal “piggy bank” and using his children as “pawns” to protect his public image.

Fotis Dulos’ divorce attorney, Rich Rochlin, filed a motion last week asking a judge to require Farber to undergo a psychiatric evaluation as part of the custody proceedings. In response, Farber’s attorney, Anne Dranginis, said her client would agree to the evaluation as long as Fotis Dulos undergoes one as well.

The 85-year-old Farber has been granted the right to intervene in her daughter’s contentious two-year divorce and has maintained custody of the couple’s five children since Jennifer Dulos went missing. Farber is now seeking sole legal custody of the children, who are between 8 and 13 years old.

Dranginis has accused Fotis Dulos of using his children, who he hasn’t seen since May 22, to improve his public image during the criminal case.

After his latest TV interview airs Monday night, Fotis Dulos will appear in court twice next week. He will be arraigned on the new tampering with evidence charge Thursday at state Superior Court in Norwalk and is scheduled for his next pre-trial hearing Friday in Stamford.

Troconis will be arraigned on the new charge Sept. 18 in Norwalk and will have her next pre-trial hearing Sept. 20 in Stamford. ■