

## N.J. judge issues temporary four-day stay on Orange layoffs

**Aliza Appelbaum/The Star-Ledger**

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**ORANGE** — The city has until Tuesday morning to resolve a dispute between the mayor and the fire, police and municipal workers unions over more than 50 proposed layoffs, a Superior Court judge ruled today.

The layoffs of 12 police officers, 12 firefighters and other municipal workers were scheduled to take effect today. The mayor is asking the unions to make concessions from raises guaranteed in their contracts to help close what he says is a \$3 million budget gap.

Judge Patricia Costello issued the order this morning, giving the unions and the mayor until 10 a.m. Tuesday to resolve the matter. Otherwise, she will render her decision.

"We were looking for the stay, so that was good, but this is a small one. We wanted something long-range," said David Fox, an attorney for the unions.

Council president Hassan Abdul-Rasheed said council members could not support the layoffs because they still had not seen a budget for the year and need a clearer picture of the city's finances. The fiscal year began in July.

"The mayor has not worked with us at all on the budget process," Abdul-Rasheed said. "We had no alternative but to work with the unions and try and get a stay for these layoffs until we get all the information."

Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. today said he does not want to release the budget until it's determined how many layoffs there will be. If the unions make concessions, he said, some jobs could be saved.

Layoffs would be done on a last-in, first-out basis, according to city officials.

Hawkins has scheduled a public forum to review the budget for Tuesday evening — after the layoff decision is made.

"In order for us to present a budget, it has to be accurate," Hawkins said. "I didn't feel I could do that until I knew for sure how many people were going to be laid off."

The Orange fire department currently has about 75 firefighters, said Orange Fire Capt. Guy DeVincentis. If all 12 are laid off, the department will be operating at a new low, he said.