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                  COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
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                  HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO
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    CITY OF MADEIRA,
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                Plaintiff,
                                Appeal No. C2000458
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    VS.
                                Case No. A1802415
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    PHILIP DOUGLAS
    OPPENHEIMER
 8
                Defendant.
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                TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
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                        FOR APPEAL
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    APPEARANCES:
    Steve Goodin, Esq.,
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    Brian W. Fox, Esq.,
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              On behalf of the Plaintiff.
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    Curt C. Hartman, Esq.,
               On behalf of the Defendant.
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              BE IT REMEMBERED that upon the hearing of
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    this cause, on September 30th, 2020, before the
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    Honorable Megan E. Shanahan, a said judge of the
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    said court, the following proceedings were had, to
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    wit:
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September 30, 2020

P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

Judgment.

THE COURT: On the record on City of Madeira versus Philip Douglas
Oppenheimer, A1802415. Set on oral arguments for a Motion for Summary

Much to my dismay, I got a phone call and e-mail yesterday from counsel for Madeira indicating that this date didn't, quote, make their calendar.

I'm angry, shocked, and appalled at the failure on behalf of counsel for allowing this to happen on this case.

Back on June 29th we had a telephone conference. That failed to make one of two counsel's calendar who got on the phone call late indicating he was at the barber.

We had an extensive discussion about whether or not the plaintiffs would exercise the right under the tolling provision and seek additional time to respond to the Motion for Summary Judgment.

Mr. Fox absolutely stated he wanted 1 2 all of his time which the Court granted, 3 indicating that the motions would be due 4 August 28th. 5 Then in e-mail my clerk gets 6 yesterday from Mr. Goodin. It says, The hearing today didn't make anyone's 7 8 calendar, and that plaintiffs thought 9 they had until month's d to respond to 10 the Summary Judgment. 11 Today is September 30th. Has the 12 response been filed? 13 MR. FOX: It has not, Your Honor. 14 THE COURT: Why? 15 MR. FOX: Well, we filed a Motion 16 to Compel and the motion --17 THE COURT: That's irrelevant. Why 18 haven't you responded to the Motion for 19 Summary Judgment? 20 MR. FOX: Your Honor, in the Motion 21 to Compel, one of the things that we 22 referenced is that the lack of 23 verification on the interrogatories and 24 their discovery responses. 25 And in the interest of maintaining

the trial date, rather than file an additional 56(F) Motion, it makes -- felt like it made more sense to file a Motion to Compel and Motion for Continuance to ask for a brief delay while defense counsel can provide some of those responses that will allow for the City of Madeira to substantively respond to their Motion for Summary Judgment.

THE COURT: Mr. Hartman?

MR. HARTMAN: Your Honor, firstly, if they thought that the Motion for Summary Judgment was due at the end of this month, it should be ready to be filed or on the verge.

THE COURT: Correct.

MR. HARTMAN: One thing -- and I've only had a chance to peruse this Motion to Compel that was filed at about 4:00 yesterday afternoon. What Mr. Fox fails to inform the Court and fails to provide to the Court was a follow-up exchange in terms of its verification.

He references an e-mail of
August 31st but he doesn't attach it to

his affidavit. I have a copy if the Court wishes for it.

In that e-mail, my e-mail to them states -- we were dealing with a federal case unrelated to this litigation, that being the federal litigation. But the vexatious litigation lawsuit, because of some short notice and immediate election-related matters, I have not been able to obtain Mr. Oppenheimer's verification interrogatories.

Nonetheless, I will work on obtaining that this week, but, in the meantime, be advised that we will not raise or object to the use of such responses even without verification, to which then Mr. Fox replied -- and, again, did not tender it to the Court -- understood on the verification.

And so we basically said we're -we will waive that issue. If they
tendered it and we'd object, one, I would
never object because I made the
representations as an officer of the
court.

Secondly, as the Court kind of laid out what happened at the telephone conference we had, which was extensive, we all recognize that the Covid 19 orders stayed any deadline that was going to be lifted August 1st, at least as of that date. It may have been extended. It was not.

We scheduled the oral agreement hearing here today based upon a timeline, 28 days to respond, 14 days for reply, give the Court about two weeks to review it.

Thirdly, I checked with the
Assignment Commissioner's Office
yesterday, and Mr. Fox did receive the
e-mail notification from the Assignment
Commissioner's Office about this hearing,
as well as the pretrial here in a couple
weeks and the trial set for November.

You know, and I would also put in the record -- I mean, I've had other issues down in federal court missing deadline. It is par for the course. I would want to supplement the record as

necessary on that.

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This was scheduled. It was noticed. Motions are unopposed.
Undisputed evidence is before the Court justifying the granting of summary judgment.

This case has been going on long enough.

Or, back up. One final thing I would say, last year when we filed summary judgment, Mr. Fox did a 56(F) affidavit saying, oh, I need more time for discovery. That was granted in July of 2019. And he has done nothing in a year.

Correction. He did try to notice the deposition of some of the attorneys who are on some of these cases that we said they may offer expert opinions.

That was got put aside. We're not calling them as experts at this stage.

And other than that, he did nothing. He did that in August a couple weeks ago.

But from July 2019 to July of 2020, he did no discovery. Came in here and

said I need more time, I need more time. 1 2 And did nothing. 3 This case -- I think it's meritless. I think it's frivolous. 4 5 But, regardless of that, we were 6 scheduled for a summary judgment which 7 has been pending since March 27th of this 8 year. They have not opposed it. It's an 9 unopposed motion with unrefuted evidence. 10 The Court should grant that motion. they have issues with the Court doing 11 12 that, they can take that up to the First 13 District. It's time for this case to 14 come to an end. Thank you. 15 THE COURT: Any response? 16 MR. GOODIN: Your Honor, if I could 17 respond briefly. On the record, Steve Goodin on behalf of the plaintiff. 18 19 And, again, Your Honor, I'm not 20 ering -- this is by way of mitigation, 21 not an excuse. 22 I want to try to put a little context, I think, to what has occurred 23 24 here.

I just learned of the gravity of

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the situation, frankly, yesterday. I did write the e-mail about it not making our calendar, which probably sounds on par with the dog ate our homework.

But what occurs and how our firm always has operated is we use an electronic calendar. For whatever reason, as we learned of the telephone conference back in June, for whatever reason, none of the dates relating to this case were docketed on our internal calendar, which I follow every day. That's why I was unaware of the original call. For some reason, this just was not docketed.

We're trying to figure out why or how that happened. I have an assistant who does that. Brian has an assistant. It just did not happen.

So, again, our -- I mean, I apologize for wasting the Court's time on all of this and for -- I would be upset if I were in your shoes as well. And I'm not very happy about how this went down myself either.

In terms of where this case is, Your Honor, this is part of a larger dispute, as the Court knows.

We were on the phone yesterday with Magistrate Judge Bowman in the Southern District. She has ordered the City of Madeira and Mr. Oppenheimer to mediate the cases pending in the Southern District which is sort of, in our view, part and parcel of this one.

We are hopeful, after having discussed this with our client representative last night and this morning, there might be a potential settlement in that matter.

Your Honor, what I would respectfully request is given these bizarre circumstances, that the Court stay the ruling today and allow us to mediate and hopefully talk about a global or omnibus resolution with Magistrate Litkovitz who is going to be the mediator in this matter. We expect to have the mediation -- she told us by the end of the year, but we're hoping maybe even

pretty soon.

After talking about this matter, again, with our client this morning, we do think that there's a pretty common sense of resolution to this.

And I will put that all on the record, given that we still need to discuss it all with counsel.

But there's been significant
movement on the part of our client, Your
Honor, in terms of resolving these
matters overall. As the Court can see
from the pleadings, the issue is just the
extent of what we view as frivolous and
expensive litigation that's been directed
at Madeira. We're trying to find some
other means of dealing with some of these
matters, rather than coming to court all
the time.

So, again, I guess in sum, Your
Honor, we have no real excuse. All I can
tell you is somehow administratively
these dates were not docketed. We would
obviously -- had I got my typical
reminders that we would gotten, we would

have had everything filed.

Also, I'm not trying to -- we're certainly in no position to throw mud. But my understanding is after having gone back and looked at the pleadings in the last 48 hours, there are some outstanding issues with discovery. There are -- we haven't seen many documents back that -- some of them, our client truly believes that there are some documents that Mr. Oppenheimer has in his possession that would be relevant to a summary judgment inquiry.

We really do feel that this is not a case that is ripe for summary judgment based on the facts. I think there's a huge factual questions to whether or not independent reasonable grounds, as is required under the statute, filed on these cases.

But, Your Honor, again we would tender our apology on behalf of our client and on behalf of the firm. It's not the client's fault. This is some sort of original internal Graydon, Head,

& Ritchey situation. And that would be our submission, Your Honor.

We appreciate the Court taking the time to hear this. And, again, we do tender a sincere apology before the Court.

MR. HARTMAN: If there was an issue with scheduling back in June, obviously, nothing -- no follow-up occurred to make sure it didn't happen again. This isn't the first time.

It happened in June on that telephone conference. If that happened to me and there was a scheduling -- I would make sure what we just agreed to in June in terms of scheduling made the calendar.

And the other thing, Mr. Goodin didn't realize that it relayed to the Court with respect to the telephone call yesterday with Magistrate Judge Bowman was nobody called in from the City of Madeira in that case either.

It took the court down there trying to call Mr. Fox because he didn't call

in. They have a call-in number. He didn't call in. They tried to call him, couldn't get ahold of him. I gave him Mr. Goodin's number. They finally got ahold of Mr. Goodin and he called in.

And during that telephone conversation, Magistrate Judge Bowman relayed to Mr. Goodin that the City of Madeira has missed deadlines repeatedly in that case. Judge Bowman said repeatedly missed deadlines. I have cut them breaks. And this was a continuation of that process. And she was annoyed at continual missed deadlines in that case.

And I would want to supplement the record if we go forward, which I don't think we should, with all that history.

Because that shows -- you know, we're now past the deadline. Not only do they got to show good cause, they've got to show excusable neglect. Mr. Goodin just said there is no excuse; therefore, their error cannot be excusable neglect. And this is so systemic. It's not excusable neglect. It's just ignoring everything,

ignoring deadlines in this case and in other cases.

You know, oh, we want to put it off so we can try this mediation, which is --well, one of the reasons we scheduled this case for trial in November, if the Court remembers during that phone conference, I'm running for judge.

THE COURT: Right.

MR. HARTMAN: And we originally were looking early 2021. I said, hey, if I get elected, knock on wood, Mr. Oppenheimer is going to be back at square one with new counsel. It's going to extend the case further. And that's all they're trying to do now is argue the -- let's push this out and see what happens with the election and get it delayed. This case has been going on long enough. They asked for extension of discovery a year ago, did nothing.

In terms of documents, they never identified the specific documents that they believe are relevant or apportioned with discovery consistent with Rule 26.

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They're wanting documents dealing with his financial arrangements on his website. And I've asked, tell me why that's relevant. Tell me why that is.

They won't. It's just you haven't given us any documents, period. Well, part of the exchange is what's -- here is why I think your objections are unfounded, here is why I think these are -- I have never -- I have been begging for that for over a year. I have never gotten that.

Now the 11th hour we get this, oh, we did file a Motion for Summary Judgment. We thought it was due today, we just don't have it ready to be filed today.

This case has to come to an end. Mr. Oppenheimer -- you know, he apologize to the Court. He never apologized to Mr. Oppenheimer for constantly dragging him down here on this stuff, on these missteps.

But this case, we have tendered it -- they actually knew what the Summary

Judgment Motion was a year and a half ago when we filed it and then filed a 56(F) motion. Fine. The Court granted. And they're not still ready to respond.

Your Honor, I would ask the Court to grant the Summary Judgment Motion.

It's supported. We have expert testimony unrefuted. They've not even identified an expert.

THE COURT: What is your position,
Mr. Hartman, on the Magistrate Judge
ordered to mediate as far as -- obviously
this is a state court case and those are
federal court cases. And I know that in
their mind they think, boy, wouldn't it
be wonderful to have a global resolution.
What is your position?

MR. HARTMAN: That may be the end result there. But we're here today on this motion -- unopposed Motion for Summary Judgment.

The federal case that mediation was ordered is a First Amendment sign regulation speech case. And that's what we're trying to get resolved. That's

what mediation has been ordered.

If this case and another case get pulled into it, it does. But we're here in our day in court. Today was our day in court for the Summary Judgment Motion that we put time, money, and energy in.

THE COURT: Yeah.

MR. HARTMAN: And we're entitled to it. As a matter of law, we are entitled to it.

It's time for this case to come to an end. We're still mediating that case and any other case -- and that other case that's going on. If that gets pulled into it, that mediation is simply over a First Amendment sign case. That's it.

I'd ask -- we've gone through it.

It's been pending since March. They knew about it. We knew the scheduling. No excusable neglect has been demonstrated.

THE COURT: No.

MR. HARTMAN: I mean, therefore -
THE COURT: I want the record to be

clear. I 100 percent -- as Mr. Goodin

pointed out, this is not Madeira's fault.

This isn't your client's fault.

It's your fault. So by no stretch of the means would I hold anything against your clients.

What I won't have happen in any case that I deal with when I can avoid it is have a case decided on a technicality. It does nothing but create issues for appeal and reasons for everybody to be dragged back into court a year from now for a whole do-over which nobody wants.

I'm not going to penalize the City of Madeira for their lawyers' failure.

But I'm also not going to reward it with continuances and entertaining what certainly seems to me to be frivolous

Motions to Compel, particularly in light of the e-mail that has been read to me in Court here today. I'm frankly a little bit surprised at the audacity at this filing at 4:00 yesterday. And then any Motion for Continuance today in light of the attorneys' failures here.

What I will do is allow the City of Madeira to file a response to their

Motion for Summary Judgment by Monday at close of business. We will not have oral argument because of the time frame. We are in a box. And I am dead set that if there is going to be a trial, that it get tried on that November 14th date.

Your client is owed that, your representation. You've been on this case since day one. That date is not moving if there is that date. Understood?

So as much as oral argument is always welcome to the Court, this will be the one time that I would deny that request.

Now, do you anticipate a response?

You don't know until you see it. Got it.

That's fair.

MR. HARTMAN: Yeah, I've got

something -- a major filing up in Butler

County on October 6th or 7th that I'm

starting to work on now. I'm hoping to

get that done. Give me -- tell you what,

if I can take a look at it, if I call

your clerk or e-mail your clerk and say,

yes, I'd like to reply, I'll get

1	something done in two or three days.
2	THE COURT: Yes.
3	MR. HARTMAN: If not, I will just
4	say it's fine as is.
5	THE COURT: Okay. So Monday the
6	5th. Are we clear? Do you need my court
7	reporter to run over and make a
8	transcript of that for you? You can put
9	it in your own calendar.
10	MR. FOX: (Nodding head.)
11	THE COURT: Monday the 5th is your
12	response. I expect to hear by the end of
13	next week, Mr. Hartman, if you're going
14	to exercise the opportunity.
15	We have a pretrial on October
16	I'm sorry. Ms. Hayes?
17	MR. HARTMAN: 29th.
18	THE CLERK: Yes.
19	THE COURT: Okay. And then the
20	trial is the 14th?
21	MR. HARTMAN: 16th.
22	THE COURT: 16th. I said the 14th.
23	Okay. All right. So you may not have a
24	decision by the pretrial.
25	And I apologize, Mr. Hartman, for

1 that. And I mean that. 2 MR. HARTMAN: If I can put two 3 things on the record. 4 THE COURT: Sure. 5 MR. HARTMAN: I just want to make 6 sure the Court does realize our objection 7 to the extension of time. I think under Rule 6 -- and I can't remember the 8 9 division -- not only must good cause be 10 shown but excusable neglect in order to 11 extend the deadline after the deadline. 12 That has not been made, I don't believe, 13 in this case. 14 Mr. Goodin even acknowledged there 15 is no excuse. So I don't think, with all 16 due respect, that is an issue I want to 17 preserve on the record. THE COURT: I understand. 18 MR. HARTMAN: I don't think the 19 20 Court should have granted that motion. 21 I will tender to the court reporter 22 as an exhibit that e-mail exchange. 23 THE COURT: Please do. 24 clarification, close of business on Monday is 4:00 p.m., not 10:00. 4:00 25

p.m. Monday.

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MR. GOODIN: Understood, Your

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Honor.

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to Compel on discovery, what do you want

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to do on that?

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MR. FOX: Your Honor, not

THE COURT: All right. The Motion

withstanding the -- his indication is not going to use or wasn't going to raise it as an issue, we still need that for purposes of preserving the record because there's some case law out that there says that in order to utilize those responses in responding to a Motion for Summary Judgment or using that as evidence, it has to be verified.

As far as the requests have been made, I can evaluate the requests that were made and narrow the -- and I tried to do that in the Motion to Compel. I tried to narrow the very specific items that we did need that would be helpful and that were not something that we could ordinarily obtain, that weren't in the custodian's order or possession of that

only Mr. Oppenheimer would have. So I can connect with opposing counsel and we can work on a plan to get that together.

THE COURT: You all need to get back to the Court if there's an issue that you guys can't remedy because we're -- if this case goes to trial, it is going November 16th.

MR. FOX: Understood.

MR. HARTMAN: If I may just on that Motion to Compel.

Firstly, in terms of the verification, we've already indicated we'll waive the issue. There is no -- if there is any error, it's invited error on our part so we couldn't even raise it as an issue. So I think that argument falls apart.

In terms of the documents, again, I don't know what specific documents are relevant. Like I said, some of the things they want, Your Honor, we believe are protected by a First Amendment privilege. This Madeira Messenger which is a website that Mr. Oppenheimer runs,

all communications concerning that, all communications with the press. They want communications that we've had with the news media about Madeira. That's First Amendment privilege. Even the Court could not order that -- that has nothing to do with the underlying litigation cases that are supposedly the foundation for the claim that they brought. And I think we're over the two years, so --

I would point out just as a correction, I've not been on the case since the beginning. I was on the bench and then I came in during the middle of the case. Just to clarify something for the Court.

MR. FOX: Thank you, Your Honor.

There was also an indication in their discovery responses that they were going to provide documents on some of the responses. But those weren't provided.

So I'm not --

MR. HARTMAN: I think both of those were public records that are available on the Clerk's website, but I'll print them

out and send them to you. If that's what 1 2 we have to do, I will do that. 3 THE COURT: I appreciate it. MR. FOX: And then in addition to 4 5 that, drafts of content. And so the 6 website that the defendant has is what it 7 is online. But that doesn't mean that 8 there weren't posts that were put on 9 there and pulled off that we would not 10 have access to. 11 Those would be the sorts of 12 things -- the sorts of documents that we 13 would like access to. 14 THE COURT: Posts that other people 15 put on that website, or that he put on 16 the website? 17 MR. FOX: That the defendant put 18 on. 19 THE COURT: That the defendant put 20 on the website and then removed from the 21 website? 22 MR. FOX: Correct, Your Honor. MR. HARTMAN: Firstly, I'm not sure 23 24 why anything on the website is relevant to whether or not he's a vexatious 25

litigator.

There is an indication from my client nothing has been pulled off, either before or after the litigation.

THE DEFENDANT: So I put -- shall

MR. HARTMAN: Has anything been taken down?

THE DEFENDANT: Practically nothing that I can recall. I actually just quickly, I'd like to say on Facebook yesterday, I stated that everything on the website that's been there is still there for this reason. I left everything on the website because I consider it evidence according to the City.

MR. HARTMAN: Any drafts of that that might have been there.

MR. FOX: I'm aware of at least one specific incident where the defendant included an analogy about a teacher ignoring a rape allegation and that being analogous to something that was going on with what the city manager was doing or -- and that's the sort of thing --

that was being scrubbed from the website or removed from the website while we had access to that that's not the --

THE COURT: What would that have to do with him being a vexatious litigator?

MR. FOX: It corroborates -- the website contains lots of descriptions about the litigation and his motivations for filing them and the other allegations that surround it.

So it gives corroboration to some of the essential elements of the case.

MR. GOODIN: Your Honor, at this point, if I may suggest -- and in respect to Counsel Hartman, perhaps it would be best just to hold the Motion to Compel in abeyance at this point. I think we can have some discussions.

And I know we're not in a position to ask for anything, but I think it might behoove us if we could have access to your jury room to talk with counsel after this for a bit I think, while we're all here, to maybe talk about some sort of common sense path forward.

	LJ
1	THE COURT: Great. Very good.
2	I'll do that. You have the full
3	use of my jury room and my courtroom.
4	I'm down the hallway if you all need me.
5	And the my jury is in the Covid room
6	so I'm not in here.
7	So Monday 4:00. You may or may not
8	have a decision by the pretrial. And if
9	I don't hear from you all, great.
10	MR. GOODIN: Thank you, Your Honor.
11	MR. HARTMAN: Thank you, Your
12	Honor.
13	(The proceedings concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE I, Andrea Hodapp, the undersigned, a Registered Professional Reporter for the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, do hereby certify that at the same time and place stated herein, I recorded in stenotype and thereafter transcribed the within 29 pages, and that the foregoing Transcript of Proceedings is a true, complete, and accurate transcript of my said stenotype notes. IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I hereunto set my hand this 8th day of February, 2021. ANDREA HODAPP Registered Professional Reporter Court of Common Pleas Hamilton County, Ohio