2	COUNTY OF SUFFOLK : PART 24
3	ELENA RUTH SASSOWER and DORIS L. SASSOWER, Individually and as Director and President,
4	respectively, of the Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc., and CENTER FOR JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY, INC., Acting
5	Pro Bono Publico,
6	Plaintiffs, INDEX NO.
7	-against-
8	
9	GANNETT COMPANY, INC., The Journal News, LoHud.com, HENRY FREEMAN, CYNDEE ROYLE,
10	BOB FREDERICKS, D. SCOTT FAUBEL, KEITH EDDINGS, DOES 1-10,
11	Defendants.
12	x
13	June 1, 2011 Riverhead, New York
14	
15	PROCEEDINGS
16	PROCEEDINGS BEFORE: HON. PETER FOX COHALAN, SUPREME COURT JUSTICE.
16 17	B E F O R E: HON. PETER FOX COHALAN,
15 16 17 18	B E F O R E: HON. PETER FOX COHALAN, SUPREME COURT JUSTICE. A P P E A R A N C E S:
16 17 18	B E F O R E: HON. PETER FOX COHALAN, SUPREME COURT JUSTICE. A P P E A R A N C E S: SARNO & DeFELICE, LLC For the Plaintiff
16 17 18	B E F O R E: HON. PETER FOX COHALAN, SUPREME COURT JUSTICE. A P P E A R A N C E S: SARNO & DeFELICE, LLC For the Plaintiff 235 West 23rd Street, 5th Floor New York, New York 10011
16 17 18 19 20 21	B E F O R E: HON. PETER FOX COHALAN, SUPREME COURT JUSTICE. A P P E A R A N C E S: SARNO & DeFELICE, LLC For the Plaintiff 235 West 23rd Street, 5th Floor
16 17 18 19	B E F O R E: HON. PETER FOX COHALAN, SUPREME COURT JUSTICE. A P P E A R A N C E S: SARNO & DeFELICE, LLC For the Plaintiff 235 West 23rd Street, 5th Floor New York, New York 10011
16 17 18 19 20 21	B E F O R E: HON. PETER FOX COHALAN, SUPREME COURT JUSTICE. A P P E A R A N C E S: SARNO & DeFELICE, LLC For the Plaintiff 235 West 23rd Street, 5th Floor New York, New York 10011 BY: JAMES A. DeFELICE, ESQ.

(APPEARANCES CONTINUED)

SATTERLEE, STEPHENS, BURKE & BURKE, LLP For the Defendants 230 Park Avenue New York, New York 10013 BY: MEGHAN H. SULLIVAN, ESQ.

MS. ELENA RUTH SASSOWER, PRO-SE

1	COURT CLERK: Remain seated. Come to
2	order.
3	The matter before the Court,
4	Sassower versus Gannett Company.
5	Counsel, state your appearances for
6	the record.
7	MS. SULLIVAN: Good afternoon, Your
8	Honor. Meghan Sullivan, from Satterlee,
9	Stephens, Burke & Burke, on behalf of the
10	Gannett defendant, and certain of the
11	individuals.
12	THE COURT: Thank you, distinguished
13	counsel.
14	MS. SASSOWER: Elena Sassower,
15	plaintiff, pro se individually, and on
16	behalf of the public.
17	THE COURT: Thank you.
18	MR. DeFELICE: James DeFelice, for
19	the plaintiff, Doris Sassower, and the
20	Center for Judicial Accountability.
21	Good afternoon, Your Honor.
22	THE COURT: Good afternoon, sir.
23	It is a pleasure to see you all.
24	We will get started by my asking
25	plaintiff if she will please rise, the

1	plaintiff pro se, and address the Court.
2	Before you do, though, I always have
3	to ask people appearing pro se, meaning
4	representing themselves in Latin, whether
5	or not you are waiving your right to have
6	an attorney?
7	MS. SASSOWER: I am, sir.
8	THE COURT: And you're willing to
9	proceed without an attorney.
10	Is that correct?
11	THE WITNESS: Yes, sir.
12	THE COURT: Okay. Thank you very
13	much.
14	You will be sworn in.
15	Would you please swear in the
16	plaintiff?
17	COURT CLERK: Yes, Judge.
18	Would you raise your right hand,
19	please?
20	(Whereupon, ELENA RUTH SASSOWER,
21	after having been first duly sworn by the
22	Clerk of the Court, testified as follows:)
23	THE WITNESS: Absolutely. So help
24	me God.
25	COURT CLERK: All right. Your name

and address for the record?

THE WITNESS: Absolutely.

MS. SASSOWER: Elena Sassower; 64
South Towd Point Road, Southampton, New
York, 11968.

COURT CLERK: Thank you.

THE COURT: Thank you. Please rise.

Please address the Court, and tell us that which you wish us to know.

MS. SASSOWER: I am here in defense of this action for libel, libel pro se, and journalistic fraud, with an additional cause of action requested for institutional reckless disregard of the truth.

I am here in opposition to a dismissal motion made by Satterlee, Stephens, Burke & Burke, on behalf of all defendants, except for two categories.

One being defendant Eddings, the reporter, who was a witness to the event, and who wrote the article at issue.

And the second class of defendants are the defendant. Does 1-10. These being the personnel associated with Gannett, who directed and instructed Mr. Eddings in the

crafting of his article, who failed to take supervisory action to insure the integrity of his journalism, who failed to retract the article when an analysis was presented showing that it was flagrantly false, and knowingly so, and defamatory.

These defendant Does include legal personnel, and upon information and belief Satterlee, Stephens, Burke & Burke is one of the defendant Does, which is the reason why it is not representing the defendant Does.

In making its dismissal motion, it does not identify the defendant. Does, and, in opposition to the cross-motion that I have made, plaintiff's have made, it does not deny or dispute that it is a defendant Doe, and that it is disqualified by reason thereof from representing the defendants in this case.

The disqualification of the law firm is a threshold issue before this Court, and that branch of the cross-motion -- and it is an eight branch cross-motion -- is completely unopposed, undenied, undisputed.

Indeed, Satterlee does not even acknowledge the existence of a branch for its disqualification, so completely does it wish to conceal this important threshold issue before the Court.

I will pause so that perhaps

Your Honor might wish to address that issue.

THE COURT: I'm going to be conducting this argument, not you.

MS. SASSOWER: Of course.

THE COURT: But is there anything you wish to add?

MS. SASSOWER: With respect to that branch?

THE COURT: Whatever you wish to say to the Court at this time.

Is there anything you wish to add?

MS. SASSOWER: Well, yes. Yes. As

demonstrated by the cross-motion papers,

the dismissal motion made by the Satterlee

firm is, from beginning to end, a fraud

upon the Court. It is founded on deceit.

It purports to seek dismissal on two

grounds.

The first ground being failure to state a cause of action.

And the second being documentary evidence. This is a pre-answer dismissal motion.

On such a motion, the elementary, legal standard is that all the allegations of the complaint are presumed true, and the duty of the Court is to afford every liberal inference to the plaintiff in ascertaining whether or not all those allegations do not state a cause of action.

What the Satterlee firm has done is to conceal, distort, falsify the allegations of the complaint to such a degree that they purport that the complaint itself is the documentary evidence, warranting dismissal on grounds of documentary evidence, not just failure to state a cause of action.

The complaint throughout alleges, with particulars, the knowingly false presentations made in the article, defamatory characterizations, and this article, let it be emphasized, is a news

4 5

article. A news article is of a different breed. A news article is not one in which a reporter's opinion is supposed to appear. It is reserved for fact.

This is an article which on its face does not comport with the standards of news articles, and purports to recite what took place on May 4th, 2009, at a Common Council meeting, at which a White Plains city court judge was reappointed.

The reporter was a witness to what took place. He received in hand the documentation substantiating the presentation made by myself and my mother, and wrote an article, which instead of reciting the facts of what we said, instead of giving any quote as to what we said, characterized it falsely, and further, made it appear as if our presentation was disruptive, unruly, protesting, interfering with the course of the Common Council meeting.

Your Honor, there is a video tape of the Common Council meeting, and the video tape substantiates a particularized

analysis of the article.

Have you as yet had an opportunity to view the videotape, may, I ask, Your Honor?

THE COURT: I ask the questions, not you.

MS. SASSOWER: I understand.

THE COURT: Is there anything you wish to add?

MS. SASSOWER: Well, in making the dismissal motion, the Satterlee firm conceals the existence of the videotape, conceals that it substantiates the analysis.

The analysis, let me point out, not only highlights that we were completely silent during the meeting, the confirmation of White Plains City Court Judge Hansbury, but highlights that the presentation we made focused on the integrity of the appointment process, and the corruption of the appointment process, as well as the documentary evidence of the corruption of the White Plains City Court Judge who was reappointed, Judge Hansbury.

This was what we presented at the Common Council meeting. The article completely conceals what we said, and in making the dismissal motion, Satterlee purports that the complaint and the analysis corroborates the article, the complaint, the analysis, the videotape, all refute, refute, repudiate the article.

The last thing I would like to say is that at issue here is not only a cause of action for libel, and libel per se, and let me just say that the Satterlee firm, in making its motion, conceals that there is a libel per se cause of action.

If you look at the caption of this action, Your Honor, you see that I appear individually, and in my professional capacity.

My mother appears as a plaintiff individually, and in her professional capacity.

Satterlee, without any authorization, without any identification, is changing the caption of the action, has made us into plaintiffs that appear only in

a single capacity, just as its dismissal motion eviscerates to nonexistence the libel per se cause of action.

Beyond that, this case is about the false representation that Journal News and Gannett make to the public, to mislead the public into believing that its journalism is trustworthy and credible.

On the same page as the article appeared -- and let me again emphasize that at issue is a news article, not an opinion piece, not a column -- on the same page there appears information saying, Reader's Representative. "If you have any questions, or concerns about anything you see in the Journal News, or about our journalistic standards and practices, please contact the Reader's Services Editor."

And on the facing page was the masthead -- is the masthead. This article appears on the third page of the newspaper. When you immediately open it up, there was the article right at the top, and on the facing page was the masthead.

The masthead has, as part of its language, a representation that accuracy, fairness and balance is important to the Journal News. And once again, if there are any questions or problems about the journalism, any errors needing correction, any clarifications required, that the Reader's Services Representative should be contacted.

At the time that appeared, the Journal News did not have a Reader's Services Editor.

THE COURT: That's extraneous.

Do you have anything further to say?

MS. SASSOWER: Well, it did additionally have a pledge as to its willingness to correct errors.

In fact --

THE COURT: Is there anything you wish to add that is new to what you have already said?

MS. SASSOWER: Well, this goes to the issue -- there is on the cross-motion, a branch for summary judgment. As part of the summary judgment, there is a request

that the Journal News be ordered to remove from its masthead its accuracy policy because it is a false and misleading advertising claim, in violation of public policy, including General Business Law Article 22(a).

Now, quite apart from the defamation here, there are a series of knowingly false representations that the Journal News makes to the public as to the integrity of its journalism and as to safeguards in place.

In fact, as detailed in the complaint, when we provided the specifics of the falsity, knowing falsity, of the article that was written about us, and its violation of First Amendment responsibilities to present the public with the issue of legitimate public concern, that were the subject of our presentation at the Common Council meeting, we were completely ignored. There was no responsiveness whatsoever.

I will, in closing, on that point, identify that Satterlee's dismissal motion concealed every allegation about the

reader's representative. Every allegation of concerning the Journal News and Gannett purported policy for accuracy, and fair and balanced journalism, and purports that the complaint says that -- purports that in bringing this action we were not satisfied with the response that Gannett made to our retraction demand. In fact, what the complaint set forth is that there was no response whatever to our retraction demand.

THE COURT: Do you have anything you wish to add?

MS. SASSOWER: Thank you, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Thank you.

Distinguished counsel, Mr. DeFelice, is there anything you wish to add?

MR. DeFELICE: Yes, Your Honor. I will be much more brief. I'm addressing the motion to dismiss brought by the defendants, and the question is, the motion to dismiss is based on the defendant's position that a defense can be established based on the documentary evidence.

First, I want to bring the article

1	to the Court's attention, which is attached
2	to the moving papers, as well as the
3	response, and is attached to the complaint.
4	THE COURT: Let me ask you a
5	question, if I may. Was this matter
6	litigated, the same exact matter, litigated
7	in Supreme Court for Western Suffolk
8	County?
9	MR. DeFELISE: No, it was not, Your
10	Honor.
11	THE COURT: It was different?
12	MR. DeFELICE: This matter was not
13	litigated. Do you mean the underlying
14	matter that the Court was or that they
15	were addressing, related to the
16	appointment?
17	THE COURT: Yes.
18	MS. SASSOWER: I think
19	THE COURT: Please. One at a time.
20	You've spoken.
21	MR. DeFELICE: Elena, you can't
22	THE COURT: Please, don't address
23	her.
24	Thank you, Mr. DeFelice. Please.
25	Please.

MR. DeFELICE: Okay. The article is entitled, "Hecklers try to derail new city judge."

The first sentence of that article says, "A city woman once jailed by Congress for interrupting a judicial confirmation, took on the Common Council and a city judge this week, when she talked through Mayor Joseph Delfino's requests."

Right away the article brings up something criminal, that true or not, the tone and tenor of the article, given its title and the first sentence, is to say that the Sassowers, who were there on behalf of their nonprofit organization.

THE COURT: Go ahead.

MR. DeFELICE: It says that they did something wrong. That's the implication here.

THE COURT: Well, let me ask you a question: Was it true or not?

MR. DeFELICE: No. I meant the first sentence alone.

THE COURT: Well, was it true that she was, in fact, jailed?

MR. DeFELICE: That's true, and we're not disputing that.

Miss Sassower -- I'm sorry -- the plaintiff's gripe is not that that portion of the article is not true, but including it there establishes right away that the tone and tenor of the article, that these women appeared at this Common Council meeting, was wrong.

THE COURT: Isn't the truth an absolute defense?

MR. DeFELICE: Again, that portion of the article is not something that's complained of. It's the rest of the article which contains multiple -- I guess what we would call, what the defense would characterize -- as minor inaccuracies. It contains many things that didn't happen on the day they appeared at this Common Counseling meeting.

THE COURT: Okay. Thank you.

MR. DeFELICE: There's multiple references. It says, "The fireworks began even before Judge Brian Hansbury arrived, when the Sassowers asked the council to

reject his renomination."

It continues to say things that they shouted out when he was brought over.

THE COURT: You're saying these are all subjective comments that should not be allowed in a news story?

MR. DeFELICE: Not that they're subjective, just that they're not true.

THE COURT: Well, if somebody shouts, or raises his or her voice, isn't that possibly shouting?

MR. DeFELICE: The complaint is that they did not shout, and that -- that if -- there is a video of the proceeding. The proceeding would show there was no shout or raised voice. There's a point where they say, "We heard an audible Hummph," during a portion where somebody else was speaking.

THE COURT: Okay. Thank you.

MR. DeFELICE: And the video would show that this did not happen.

THE COURT: So your argument right now is that everything, not everything, but that which was quoted in the paper, was erroneous, false and basically libelous.

MR. DeFELICE: That's correct, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Thank you very much.

MR. DeFELICE: In addition to that, there was something that's left out of the article, and I will cite a case that refers to information that's left out, that if known, would change the tone and tenor of the article, but what has been left out of the article is that when the individual plaintiffs both stood up and spoke, it was during a portion of this meeting where the floor was actually opened up to individuals to speak, addressing their concerns for what's on the agenda that day.

THE COURT: Have we reached a point in the State of New York where you can sue for libel for something that wasn't said?

MR. DeFELICE: If -- yes. My answer is yes. In the article, something that -- if a piece of information that would change the tone and tenor of the article which -- right away, the tone and tenor of the article is she did something wrong in the past; therefore, she's doing something

wrong by speaking here.

When the truth is, the truth is, they were exercising their right to speak during a portion of the meeting --

THE COURT: Please, no colloquy.

MR. DeFELICE: -- during a portion of the meeting where they were actually allowed to speak, and nowhere in the article does it contain that.

Now, the case that we're relying on is a case -- it's a case from the Second Department, Appellate Division Second Department -- the citation is 46 A.D.3d 636, and it is what year -- it is a 2007 case. The title is Gerard Matovcik v. Times Beacon Record Newspapers, also known as, et al.

In that case, I believe it is a

Miller Place school teacher, head of the

English Department, charged students for -asked students to bring in money for books,
and the paper found out that that money was
spent on something other than books. It
was spent on things. It was spent on an
air-conditioners for the teacher's room and

1 faculty lunches. 2 THE COURT: Okay. What is your 3 point? 4 Go ahead. 5 MR. DeFELICE: I am just giving the 6 Court --7 THE COURT: You don't have to. 8 MR. DeFELICE: -- a frame of 9 reference, okay. The point is that case 10 says -- the article left out the fact that 11 most of the money actually was spent on 12 books for the school children that paid the 13 money; and therefore, the Court, the 14 Appellate Department, reinstated the case 15 and reversed the decision that granted the 16 dismissal motion. 17 THE COURT: By Appellate Department, 18 obviously, you mean the Appellate Division? 19 MR. DeFELISE: Yes. 20 THE COURT: Okay. Thank you. 21 MR. DeFELISE: Thank you, Your 22 Honor. 23 THE COURT: Thank you, sir. 24 Distinguished counsel, audi alteram 25 partem, as they used to say, I will hear

MS. SULLIVAN: Good afternoon, Your

1

the other side.

2

3

Honor.

4

THE COURT: Good afternoon,

5

distinguished counsel.

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

MS. SULLIVAN: In an attempt to

bring the Court back to why we're really

here, to the extent possible, we're here

because on May 4th, 2009, Doris and Elena

Sassower appeared before the White Plains

Common Council to protest the nomination of

City Court Judge Brian Hansbury.

THE COURT: Right.

MS. SULLIVAN: Two days later, the

Journal News wrote an article describing

their protest. That article is included at

pages eight and nine of our brief, for the

Court's reference.

THE COURT: I read it.

MS. SULLIVAN: It's initially

difficult to tell, both from the article,

and from the moving papers, the complaint,

what exactly in the article the plaintiff's

complained about.

The article, even on a cursory

inspection of the article, describes Elena and Doris Sassower's protest as heckling.

The article describes them as using slings and arrows, and the article makes reference to them creating fireworks.

It is on the basis of this language, and it's important that I focus the Court's attention on this language because plaintiff's opposition brief makes it clear that that's the language we're talking about. That's the language in the article that plaintiff's claim is defamatory.

On the basis of this language, the Sassowers sued eight named defendants, and identified the defendants, which, Your Honor, we were surprised to learn that my firm is ostensibly included in the unnamed defendants for libel, and a cause of action that plaintiff's deem journalistic fraud.

The Sassower's claim fails for at least five reasons.

THE COURT: Go ahead.

MS. SULLIVAN: At least five reasons, but I want to focus on two of those reasons today.

1	First and foremost, the plaintiff's
2	claim fails because the complaint itself,
3	specifically Exhibit 7 to the complaint,
4	which Miss Sassower referenced in her
5	argument, is an analysis that plaintiffs
6	submitted to the Journal News after the
7	article was published.
8	The analysis established that the
9	sting gist or staying of the article
10	THE COURT: I apologize.
11	MS. SULLIVAN: No worry.
12	THE COURT: I apologize. Please
13	proceed.
14	MS. SULLIVAN: Proceed?
15	THE COURT: Please proceed.
16	MS. SULLIVAN: The gist or *staying
17	of the article is substantially true, Your
18	Honor.
19	THE COURT: Thank you.
20	How about the use of the word,
21	fireworks?
22	MS. SULLIVAN: Yes, yes. The
23	article does say fireworks.
24	THE COURT: Why? I mean, that is a
25	figurative expression, is it not, not a

literal expression?

MS. SULLIVAN: Absolutely. It's a figurative expression, as are all of the statements, complained of by plaintiffs.

They are not, as is required under well established New York law, to state a claim of action or cause of action for libel.

They are not factual statements. They cannot be construed as defamatory, as a matter of law, because in order to be defamatory, as a matter of law, the statement has to constitute a fact.

THE COURT: But was it a fact that fireworks were displayed?

MS. SULLIVAN: Your Honor, as far as I'm aware, the Sassowers did not actually display incendiary devices at the White Plains Common Council meeting.

It is unquestionable, though, that the word and phrases are properly understood as figurative statements.

THE COURT: Do you think it's proper for a reporter to use figurative statements in a news story, as opposed to an analysis for a news column?

MS. SULLIVAN: Absolutely, Your

Honor. News articles are not exempt from

the requirement under New York Law, that in

order to be actionable, a statement has to

constitute a fact.

Miss Sassower's attempt to make the distinction between editorial opinion articles and news articles, but New York law simply does not make that distinction. The law is clear that in order to be libelous, you have to state a fact.

THE COURT: I am somewhat familiar with the issues. My father was the last public official in New York State to successfully sue a newspaper for libel. He sued Newsday, when he was the District Attorney of our county years ago, and won. That hasn't happened since because of Sullivan against New York Times --

MS. SULLIVAN: -- yes.

THE COURT: Sullivan is your last name?

MS. SULLIVAN: Yes.

THE COURT: So I am quite well aware of these kinds of issues.

4

5 6

7

8 9

10

11

12 13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

MS. SULLIVAN: And there's no relation, Your Honor.

Miss Sassower, her position is that the distinction between editorial and news articles is, it is a fiction, it is not true, and Miss Sassower should be aware that it's not true.

A strikingly similar case was brought by the Sassowers in 2006, in Westchester County against the New York Times, for an article that was written about the Sassowers, that described Elena Sassower as "A gadfly. Something of a handful. Possessed of a relentless and exhaustive conversational style. Specializing in frontal assault against judicial nominees."

Justice Loehr, in Westchester County, heard almost identical claims, including a cross-motion for sanctions against the New York Time's counsel, including the suggestion that the New York Times counsel was, in fact, one of the unnamed Doe defendants.

This is a strikingly similar case in

1	many respects, and the disposition that was
2	reached by Justice Loehr, that
3	Miss Sassower has since deemed a fraud,
4	should be instructive to the Court here.
5	They are very similar issues, and I'm happy
6	to discuss any of the other reasons that
7	the Sassowers fail.
8	THE COURT: Thank you very much,
9	distinguished counsel.
10	MS. SULLIVAN: Thank you, Your
11	Honor.
12	MS. SASSOWER: May I? May I
13	THE COURT: No, no. Thank you
14	very much.
15	MS. SASSOWER: rebut?
16	THE COURT: No. Thank you very
17	much.
18	I am going to reserve.
19	Thank you distinguished counsel,
20	Mr. DeFelice, distinguished counsel,
21	Miss Sullivan, and Miss Sassower.
22	MS. SASSOWER: May I make a
23	submission for the clarification?
24	THE COURT: Off the record. Off the
25	record.

Thank you.

Remain seated.

(Whereupon, the matter was

concluded.)

* * *

CERTIFICATION

I, JILLIAN CASSAR, Official Court Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate copy of my stenographic notes taken this date.