

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM CHARLESTON COUNTY
Court of Common Pleas
Honorable J.C. Nicholson, Jr., Circuit Court Judge
Case No. 2015-CP-10-942

Robin S. Forman, as Personal
Representative of the Estate of
Burton J. Apat,

Respondent,

v.

National Dental Systems, LLC
d/b/a DentalSmart,

Appellant.

RESPONDENT'S FINAL BRIEF

MARK A. MASON, Esquire
S.C. Bar No.: 3676
SALAH H. HIBRI, Esquire
S.C. Bar No.: 79976
The Mason Law Firm, P.A.
465 W. Coleman Blvd, Ste. 302
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464
Tel: (843) 884-1444
Fax: (843) 884-3595
Mark@masonlawfirm.com
Salah@masonlawfirm.com

Attorneys For Respondent

RECEIVED

MAR 07 2017

SC Court of Appeals

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM CHARLESTON COUNTY
Court of Common Pleas
Honorable J.C. Nicholson, Jr., Circuit Court Judge
Case No. 2015-CP-10-942

Robin S. Forman, as Personal
Representative of the Estate of
Burton J. Apat,

Respondent,

v.

National Dental Systems, LLC
d/b/a DentalSmart,

Appellant.

RESPONDENT'S FINAL BRIEF

MARK A. MASON, Esquire
S.C. Bar No.: 3676
SALAH H. HIBRI, Esquire
S.C. Bar No.: 79976
The Mason Law Firm, P.A.
465 W. Coleman Blvd, Ste. 302
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464
Tel: (843) 884-1444
Fax: (843) 884-3595
Mark@masonlawfirm.com
Salah@masonlawfirm.com

Attorneys For Respondent

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF
AUTHORITIES.....iii

I. STATEMENT OF ISSUES ON APPEAL.....1

 A. Whether National Dental Submitted
 Admissible Evidence Which Created
 A Genuine Issue of Material Fact
 With Regard To The CBC Claim?.....1

 B. Whether National Dental Was Denied
 a Full and Fair Opportunity to Conduct
 Discovery?1

II. STATEMENT OF THE CASE.....1

III. STATEMENT OF FACTS..... 2

IV. ARGUMENT AND CITATION OF
AUTHORITY..... 3

 A. National Dental Failed to Present Any
 Admissible Evidence to Refute The CBC
 Claim.....3

 B. National Dental Failed to Argue Before
 the Circuit Court That It Needed to Engaged
 in Discovery to Refute to CBC Claim..... 4

V. CONCLUSION..... 5

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Case Decisions

Garrett v. Reese, 262 S.C. 327, 329, 204 S.E.2d 432, 433 (1974)..... 3

Cisson v. Pickens S. & L. Ass'n, 258 S.C. 37, 186 S.E.2d 822 (1972)3

Dunn v. Dunn, 298 S.C. 499, 381 S.E.2d 734 (1989) 4

Osborne v. Adams, 338 S.C. 82, 525 S.E.2d 268 (Ct.App.1999) 4

Fontaine v. Peitz, 291 S.C. 536, 354 S.E.2d 565 (1987) 4

Degenhart v. Knights of Columbus, 309 S.C. 114, 420 S.E.2d 495 (1992)4

Pryor v. Northwest Apartments, Ltd., 321 S.C. 524, 469 S.E.2d 630 (Ct.App.1996) 4

Bayle v. S.C. Dep't of Transp., 344 S.C. 115, 128, 542 S.E.2d 736, 742–43 (Ct. App. 2001) 5

Statutes, Regulations and Court Rules

4 C.J.S. Appeal & Error § 219 (1993) 5

I. STATEMENT OF ISSUE ON APPEAL

- A. Whether National Dental Submitted Admissible Evidence Which Created A Genuine Issue of Material Fact With Regard To The CBC Claim?
- B. Whether National Dental Was Denied a Full and Fair Opportunity to Conduct Discovery?

II. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

This case involves a business loan agreement entered into on or about 5 January 2013, between the Appellant, National Dental Systems, LLC d/b/a DentalSmart, (“National Dental”) and the Respondent, Burton J. Apat (“Apat”). On 2 March, 2016, Mr. Apat’s Estate sued National Dental alleging it had breach two of the Loan Agreement’s provisions: one requiring National Dental to repay the loan (the “Loan Claim”) and the other requiring National Dental to pay for construction work performed by CBC on its premises and as required by the Agreement (the “CBC Claim). (ROA 00003-4, ¶¶ 19-30). Apat sought declaratory and injunctive relief, as well as actual damages and attorney’s fees. (ROA 00002, ¶¶ 5-6). In its Answer and at the summary judgment hearing, National Dental admitted that the \$100,000 loan has not been repaid (ROA 00010, ¶ 7).

On 9 June 2016, Apat moved for summary judgment on the grounds that the Agreement is unambiguous and the Court need not look beyond its four corners to determine its meaning and therefore summary judgment is appropriate. Apat further moved for summary judgment as to the contract payment obligation of National Dental to CBC in the amount of \$56,654.12 – the CBC Claim.

The Circuit Court heard Apat’s motion on 3 August, 2016. (ROA 00039). By written order, dated 17 August, 2016, the Circuit Court granted Apat partial summary

judgment in the amount of \$56,654.14 on the CBC Claim. (ROA 00038). On 8 September, 2016, National Dental moved for reconsideration (ROA 00042-43). The Circuit Court denied National Dental's motion on 19 September, 2016. (ROA 00046). This appeal followed.

III. STATEMENT OF FACTS

This case involves a short term, high risk business loan agreement entered into on or about 5 January 2013, between the Appellant, National Dental Systems, LLC d/b/a DentalSmart, ("National Dental") and the Respondent, Burton J. Apat ("Apat"). The principal amount of the loan was \$100,000, as memorialized in the written one page Loan Agreement ("The Agreement"). The Agreement contained a provision requiring that National Dental make certain payments to CBC as part of the Agreement. The Agreement was drafted by the President of National Dental, Brian Schleifer. (ROA 00033-35). Schleifer and RJ Adolphi signed on behalf of the borrower, National Dental. Burton Apat signed as the lender. The Agreement also delineated the term of the loan as 30 days. The Agreement provided that the interest for the 30 day term is \$15,000. The Agreement further indicated that "if the loan is not repaid in 30 days, the Interest is doubled to \$30,000." The Agreement then states "Interest shall accrue in 30 days increments." The Agreement also contains a named third party beneficiary, Complete Building Corporation ("CBC"). The Agreement requires that "...the CBC payments shall be made in full in two (2) equal payments with the second payment within 60 days."

After the Agreement was signed, National Dental received \$100,000.00 in loan proceeds from Apat. (ROA 00002, ¶ 8, ROA 00009, ¶ 5; ROA 00021, ¶ 18; ROA 00034, ¶7). National Dental made two \$15,000 interest payments, but to date, has made no other

interest payments, has not repaid any of the \$100,000 principal, nor has National Dental paid the \$56,654.12 due to CBC.

At the summary judgment hearing in this case, National Dental introduced only the Affidavit of Brian Schleifer. Mr. Schleifer's affidavit made no mention of Complete Building Corporation nor did it mention the CBC payments. The Circuit Court heard oral argument from both parties regarding the Loan Claim and the CBC Claim. The Court denied Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment as to the Loan Claim, but found that "[National Dental] did not dispute, by way of the submission of admissible evidence, that it owed CBC the sum of \$56,654.12 as alleged in [Mr. Apat's] motion and supported by an affidavit." (ROA 00040). The Circuit Court, held, as a matter of law, that (a) the CBC provision was a separate and independent covenant, distinct from the covenant to repay the \$100,000 loan, (b) the CBC provision was unambiguous and could be read from the four corners of the loan agreement, and (c) no genuine issue of material fact existed as to National Dental's "breach of the CBC covenant, or as to the amount owed CBC." (ROA 00040-41).

IV. ARGUMENT AND CITATION OF AUTHORITY

A. National Dental Failed to Present Any Admissible Evidence To Refute The CBC Claim

The Schleifer Affidavit, upon which National Dental relies, makes absolutely no mention of the CBC Claim. (ROA 00033-35).¹ The Circuit Court correctly concluded that National Dental "did not dispute, by way of the submission of admissible evidence"

¹ "Where the appellant relies solely upon the pleadings, files no counter-affidavits, and makes no factual showing in opposition to a motion for summary judgment, the lower court is required under this rule, to grant summary judgment, if, under the facts presented by the respondent, he was entitled to judgment as a matter of law." Garrett v. Reese, 262 S.C. 327, 329, 204 S.E.2d 432, 433 (1974) (quoting, Cisson v. Pickens S. & L. Ass'n, 258 S.C. 37, 186 S.E.2d 822)

that the CBC Claim was owed to Complete Building Corporation. The Schleifer Affidavit addressed only the Loan Claim. National Dental provided no other evidence by way of Affidavit or otherwise to refute the CBC Claim. Apat, on the other hand, introduced the Affidavit of Victor Apat in support of its Motion for Summary Judgment which provided the exact amount of the debt relative to the CBC construction work. (ROA 00021-23) Nothing in the Schleifer affidavit addressed the CBC Claim nor did National Dental seek to introduce any other admissible evidence to refute the CBC Claim. Accordingly, the Circuit Court properly concluded that National Dental “did not dispute, by way of the submission of admissible evidence” that the CBC Claim was owed to Complete Building Corporation.

B. National Dental Failed to Argue Before the Circuit Court That It Needed to Engage in Discovery to Refute the CBC Claim

In its appeal, National Dental now argues that it should be afforded the opportunity to conduct discovery as to the CBC Claim. National Dental did not raise its need for discovery in Defendant’s Brief in Opposition to Summary Judgment, in the Schliefer Affidavit nor in Defendant’s Motion to Reconsider. (ROA 26-35,). The Circuit Court correctly granted Partial Summary Judgment as to the CBC Claim as a matter of law, however in any event, Appellant failed to raise its claim that discovery was not complete before the Circuit Court.² Accordingly, the Circuit Court’s granting of Partial Summary Judgment as to the CBC Claim was not premature.

² “The rulings of a trial judge in matters involving discovery will not be disturbed on appeal absent a clear showing of an abuse of discretion. *Dunn v. Dunn*, 298 S.C. 499, 381 S.E.2d 734 (1989); *Osborne v. Adams*, 338 S.C. 82, 525 S.E.2d 268 (Ct.App.1999). An abuse of discretion occurs when the trial judge's ruling is based upon an error of law or, when based on factual conclusions, is without evidentiary support. *Fontaine v. Peitz*, 291 S.C. 536, 354 S.E.2d 565 (1987); *Osborne, supra*.

We note initially that Bayle did not move for a continuance in which to pursue further discovery. Therefore, this issue is not preserved for review on appeal. See *Degenhart v. Knights of Columbus*, 309 S.C. 114, 420 S.E.2d 495 (1992)(stating whether court erred in granting summary judgment while

V. CONCLUSION

Based upon the foregoing arguments, evidence in the record and citation of authority, the Respondent, Robin S. Forman, as Personal Representative of the Estate of Burton J. Apat, respectfully requests that this Court affirm the Circuit Court's grant of partial summary judgment in the amount of \$56,654.14 on the CBC Claim.

Respectfully Submitted

THE MASON LAW FIRM, P.A.

BY: 

MARK A. MASON

SALAH H. HIBRI

Tidewatch Centre on Shem Creek
465 W. Coleman Boulevard, Suite 302
Mount Pleasant, S.C. 29464
Telephone: (843) 884-1444
Facsimile: (843) 884-3595

**E-mail: mark@masonlawfirm.com
salah@masonlawfirm.com**

Attorneys for the Respondent.

Mount Pleasant, South Carolina

August 4, 2017

appellants had motion to compel outstanding was not preserved when appellants failed to move for a continuance and did not request motion for summary judgment be held in abeyance until after ruling on discovery motion); *Pryor v. Northwest Apartments, Ltd.*, 321 S.C. 524, 469 S.E.2d 630 (Ct.App.1996)(holding that issue as to whether judge erred in granting summary judgment because discovery requests were outstanding was not preserved where appellant did not ask court to continue case so discovery could be completed).

Bayle did not present argument regarding the necessity for additional discovery until after the motion for summary judgment had **743 been granted. DOT briefly addressed the discovery issue in anticipation of Bayle's response to its motion for summary judgment. This is insufficient to preserve the issue for review. *See* 4 C.J.S. *Appeal & Error* § 219 (1993)("As a general rule, the objection in the trial court must have been made by the party who urges the error in the appellate court."). *Bayle v. S.C. Dep't of Transp.*, 344 S.C. 115, 128, 542 S.E.2d 736, 742-43 (Ct. App. 2001)

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM CHARLESTON COUNTY
Court of Common Pleas
Honorable J.C. Nicholson, Jr., Circuit Court Judge
Case No. 2015-CP-10-942

Robin S. Forman, as Personal Representative
of the Estate of Burton J. Apat,Respondent,

v.

National Dental Systems, LLC d/b/a DentalSmart.....Appellant.

CERTIFICATE OF COUNSEL

The undersigned certifies that this **Respondent's Final Brief** complies with Rule 211(b)
of South Carolina Appeal Court Rules.



MARK A. MASON, Esquire
S.C. Bar No.: 3676
SALAH H. HIBRI, Esquire
S.C. Bar No.: 79976
The Mason Law Firm, P.A.
465 W. Coleman Blvd, Ste. 302
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464
Tel: (843) 884-1444
Fax: (843) 884-3595
Mark@masonlawfirm.com
Salah@masonlawfirm.com

RECEIVED

AUG 07 2017

SC Court of Appeals

Attorneys for Respondent
ROBIN S. FORMAN, AS PERSONAL
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ESTATE
OF BURTON J. APAT

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM CHARLESTON COUNTY
Court of Common Pleas
Honorable J.C. Nicholson, Jr., Circuit Court Judge
Case No. 2015-CP-10-942

Robin S. Forman, as Personal
Representative of the Estate of
Burton J. Apat,

Respondent,

v.

National Dental Systems, LLC
d/b/a DentalSmart,

Appellant.


PROOF OF SERVICE

MARK A. MASON, Esquire
S.C. Bar No.: 3676
SALAH H. HIBRI, Esquire
S.C. Bar No.: 79976
The Mason Law Firm, P.A.
465 W. Coleman Blvd, Ste. 302
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464
Tel: (843) 884-1444
Fax: (843) 884-3595
Mark@masonlawfirm.com
Salah@masonlawfirm.com

Attorneys For Respondent

I, Salah H. Hibri, Esquire, hereby certify that on 4 August, 2017, I served one copy of **Respondent's Final Brief**, submitted by the Respondent, Robin S. Forman, as Personal Representative of the Estate of Burton J. Apat, on the following via United States Mail, postage pre-paid, and addressed as follows:

Paul A. Domnick, Esquire
Stephen P. Groves, Sr., Esquire
Alexandra H. Austin, Esquire
NEXSEN PRUET, LLC
205 King Street, Suite 400
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Salah H. Hibri', written over a horizontal line.

Salah H. Hibri, Esquire

Mount Pleasant, South Carolina
4 August 2017

MARK A. MASON
ANTHONY E. FORSBERG
SALAH H. HIBRI
GABRIELLE Z. LEE (LICENSED IN SC, PA & CO)

THE MASON LAW FIRM, P.A.

TIDEWATCH CENTRE ON SHEM CREEK
465 W. COLEMAN BOULEVARD, SUITE 302
POST OFFICE BOX 1271
MT. PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA 29464

TELEPHONE: (843) 884-1444
FACSIMILE: (843) 884-3595
Reply to Mt. Pleasant Office
WWW.MASONLAWFIRM.COM

EDISTO ISLAND OFFICE
430 S.C. HIGHWAY 174
EDISTO ISLAND, S.C. 29438
(843) 869-4000

August 4, 2017

VIA UPS OVERNIGHT

The Honorable Jenny Abbott Kitchings
Clerk of Court
SOUTH CAROLINA COURT OF APPEALS
Post Office Box 11629
Columbia, SC 29211

RE: Robin S. Forman, as Personal Representative of the Estate of Burton J. Apat, v. National Dental Systems, LLC d/b/a DentalSmart

Civil Action No.: 2016-CP-10-1022 (Honorable J.C. Nicholson, Jr. - Charleston County)
MLF File No: 16-010

Dear Mrs. Kitchings:

Enclosed herewith for filing with the Court of Appeals, please find the following:

- 1 unbound copy of Respondent's Final Brief
- 15 bound copies of Respondent's Final Brief
- Certificate of Counsel

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With kind regards, I remain

Yours very truly,

THE MASON LAW FIRM, P.A.


Salah H. Hibri

SHH/

Enclosures as stated

CC: All counsel of record

RECEIVED

AUG 07 2017

SC Court of Appeals