

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Bedell v. Parsons

Docket No. 51892-2024

This case concerns a dispute between co-tenants over real property in Bonneville County, Idaho (“the Property”). Paul Martin Bedell and Joanne Parsons were in a long-term, unmarried romantic relationship and lived together in Parsons’ home in California. While in the relationship, Bedell and Parsons purchased the Property. Both of their names were listed on the purchase and sale agreement and on the deed conveying the Property. When their relationship ended, Parsons attempted to quitclaim her interest in the Property to a non-profit organization in California. Bedell then filed an action to quiet title to the Property solely in his name or, in the alternative, partition the Property in kind by awarding him the entirety of the Property.

Following several motions for summary judgment, the district court denied Bedell’s motion but granted summary judgment for Parsons on the partition claim. Relying on the Idaho Supreme Court’s decision in *Demoney-Hendrickson v. Larsen*, 171 Idaho 917, 527 P.3d 520 (2023), the court concluded that (1) Parsons had an interest in the Property because her name was on the deed, (2) Parsons possessed an equal interest in the Property because the deed did not specify otherwise and Bedell failed to rebut the presumption of equal shares, and (3) partition by sale was the appropriate method of partition. The district court also awarded Parsons reasonable attorney fees under Idaho Code section 12-121.

Bedell filed a motion for reconsideration and submitted additional evidence in support of his position that he should be deemed to have a 100% ownership interest in the Property. The district court found that the additional evidence still failed to rebut the presumption of equal shares and declined to reverse its decision granting summary judgment. However, it reversed its decision awarding attorney fees to Parsons as premature because other claims remained pending.

Parsons then filed an additional motion for summary judgment, seeking dismissal of any potential claim for contribution since Bedell had failed to plead such a claim. The district court granted the motion.

Bedell appealed, arguing that the district court erred when it granted (1) Parsons’ summary judgment motion on Bedell’s partition claim; (2) Parsons’ additional summary judgment motion, and concluded that Bedell had waived a contribution claim; and (3) Parsons’ request for attorney fees under Idaho Code section 12-121.

The Idaho Supreme Court reversed the district court’s decisions. The Court concluded that the district court erred when it relied on disputed material facts and weighed the parties’ evidence to conclude that Parsons had an equal ownership interest in the Property. However, the Court affirmed the district court’s decision granting Parsons’ additional motion for summary judgment. The Court concluded that Bedell waived any potential contribution claim by failing to plead it. Finally, the Court reversed the district court’s award of attorney fees and costs to Parsons as there is not yet a prevailing party. The case was remanded to the district court for further proceedings consistent with the opinion.

This summary constitutes no part of the opinion of the Court, but has been prepared by court staff for the convenience of the public.