

NEWS//

NEIGHBOR SUIT OVER SHORT-TERM RENTAL FLAP DISMISSED

BY: **Carlos Moncada**

SEMINOLE--A judge has dismissed a lawsuit that a short-term rental operator and his wife filed against a next-door neighbor for allegedly invading their privacy.

The Pinellas County circuit court action came at the request of the operator, William Chatt, and his wife Graziella, after the neighbor, J.C. Cali, filed a

missed," Joseph P. Kenny, a St. Petersburg-based attorney for Cali, stated in his motion to dismiss.

After the Chatts filed a motion to dismiss their case, circuit judge Rebecca Hamilton did so on May 13 "without prejudice," meaning that the case can be refiled at a later date, according to the court order.

In their original complaint, which was the subject of a Pinellas Press story in April, the Chatts alleged that Cali installed a camera on his roof, pointing it directly into their backyard. They alleged the camera was an intrusion



Rooftop Camera with Flag

Photo Source: Pinellas Cty Court Files

motion to dismiss the case on several grounds. upon their seclusion and that of their guests.

Among the arguments that Cali's lawyer raised was that William Chatt was dis-qualified from representing himself and his wife in court because their four-bedroom, two-bath pool home is deeded into a trust.

The Chatts are identified as co-trustees of the Chatt Family Revocable Living Trust, according to Pinellas County property records.

In Florida, a trustee cannot represent the trust or its beneficiaries "pro se," or without an attorney.

William Chatt, a lawyer, is licensed to practice law in Illinois but not Florida.

"Florida law is clear that non-attorneys may not represent a trust pro se, as such the complaint is a legal nullity and must be dis-

They also alleged that Cali, among other things, used outdoor speakers to blast random sounds — including crying babies, barking dogs, revving chainsaws, even pornographic movie clips — at the couple's backyard.

Records show that Pinellas County sheriff deputies responded to the Chatt home at least 10 times since 2022. However, the Chatts stated in

their now-dismissed suit that they never received any violation notices about loud noises or parties and that Cali's complaints were unfounded.

They had sought an injunction to have the rooftop camera and a wall-mounted cam-

era removed or disabled, among other relief.