

THIRD DIVISION

[A.M. NO. P-05-2073 (FORMERLY OCA I.P.I. NO. 05-2144-P), August 29, 2006]

RUTH A. COLLADO, COMPLAINANT, VS. ADONIS L. SEVIDAL, SHERIFF IV, RTC, BR. 44, DAGUPAN CITY, RESPONDENT.

RESOLUTION

QUISUMBING, J.:

Before us is the administrative complaint^[1] of Ruth A. Collado charging Sheriff Adonis L. Sevidal^[2] with serious misconduct and violation of Republic Act No. 3019, the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

The factual antecedents of the complaint are as follows:

In May 1994, the spouses Rufino and Estela Austria mortgaged to the Philippine National Bank (PNB) a parcel of land designated as Lot No. 3544 and covered by Transfer Certificate of Title (TCT) No. 61509 of the Registry of Deeds of Dagupan City. When the spouses Austria failed to comply with the terms and conditions of the mortgage, PNB foreclosed the mortgage extrajudicially. By virtue of the special power of attorney attached in the deed of mortgage in favor of PNB, Sheriff Vinez A. Hortaleza of the Regional Trial Court of Dagupan City sold Lot No. 3544 at a public auction. PNB was the highest bidder at the auction conducted on May 13, 1996, and a certificate of sale was issued to it.

Ownership of the lot was consolidated on PNB upon the expiration of the redemption period on February 4, 1998. TCT No. 61509 was cancelled and TCT No. 69390 was issued in PNB's name.^[3]

On July 30, 2003, PNB filed with Regional Trial Court of Dagupan City, Branch 44, an *ex parte* petition docketed as S.P. No. 2003-0132-D for the issuance of a writ of possession. The trial court, pursuant to the provisions of Act No. 3135,^[4] as amended, ordered the issuance of a writ of possession on October 1, 2003. The trial court decreed,

WHEREFORE, let a writ of possession issue in favor of the Philippine National Bank and the mortgagors Rufino Austria and Estela Austria and all persons claiming rights under them and those acting under their direction and control are ordered to vacate the premises identified as Lot 3544 situated in Dagupan City, covered by and embraced by TCT No. 69390 of the Register of Deeds of Dagupan City.^[5]

Respondent Sheriff served the writ of possession on the occupants of the lot. All except one failed to vacate. Thus, upon PNB's motion, the trial court ordered the issuance of a writ of demolition. The Clerk of Court then issued the writ commanding

respondent "to remove and demolish all structures and any other improvements found [on said lot]."^[6]

On November 9, 2004, respondent served the writ of demolition on the remaining occupants of Lot No. 3544.

On November 16, 2004, respondent arrived at the premises with 20 men. To aid in the execution, PNB caused a relocation survey to be conducted to ascertain the boundaries of the property. It was discovered that a portion of the concrete fence of complainant, who owned an adjoining lot, as well as a portion of her brother's house, encroached on Lot No. 3544. Respondent then demolished those structures found on Lot No. 3544, over the objections of complainant who insisted that the lot on which her fence and her brother's house stood were still part of her own lot, Lot No. 3557.

Complainant now claims that respondent exceeded and violated his authority by maliciously and unlawfully causing the demolition of her concrete fence that was allegedly well within her own lot. She also claims that respondent destroyed and ransacked her brother's house, which was likewise within her lot, and coerced him to leave under threat that otherwise "something bad would happen to him." She stresses that neither she nor her brother were parties in S.P. No. 2003-0132-D and laments the denial to them of due process.

In his comment, filed upon order of the Office of the Court Administrator, respondent maintains that he properly executed the writ of demolition. He avers that he merely implemented the writ of demolition which commanded him "to remove and demolish all structures and any other improvements found [on Lot No. 3544]." Thus, it was his duty to demolish a part of complainant's fence because it encroached on said lot. He further denies ever touching the house of complainant's brother, much less ransacking it, and asserts that he never threatened anybody. He also denies that complainant was denied due process. He points out that complainant's children, who were actual occupants of her property, filed a motion to intervene in S.P. No. 2003-0132-D and then actually intervened in said proceedings.^[7]

In a memorandum dated August 2, 2005, then Court Administrator Presbitero J. Velasco, Jr., found respondent liable and recommended to this Court that a fine of P5,000 be imposed on him.^[8]

We find no reason to disagree with said findings and recommendation of the Court Administrator.

The decision in S.P. No. 2003-0132-D which respondent was executing, was directed only against "the mortgagors Rufino Austria and Estela Austria and all persons claiming rights under them and those acting under their direction and control."^[9] The writ of possession, issued to implement the decision, was likewise only against said persons. Even the writ of demolition reiterated that the court had commanded said persons to vacate the properties. Complainant and her brother, however, were occupying a portion of Lot No. 3544 adversely to the spouses Austria. Complainant claimed that the lot on which her fence and a portion of her brother's house stood were still part of her lot, Lot No. 3557, which adjoined Lot No. 3544. Thus, both