

CALIFORNIA COURT OF APPEAL, THIRD APPELLATE DISTRICT

Sacramento Television Stations Inc. v. Superior Court

Sac TV · No. C102316 · Decided June 6, 2025

SUMMARY

The California Court of Appeal reviews a writ proceeding concerning whether the City of Roseville was required under the California Public Records Act to disclose additional body-camera, dashboard-camera, and other recordings depicting a police shooting. The court holds that the superior court correctly determined that more disclosure was required under Government Code section 7923.625, but that the finding that disclosure would substantially interfere with an active investigation was not supported by substantial evidence. The court vacates the ruling and directs the superior court to conduct further proceedings, including an in camera review, to determine the extent of disclosure required.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	California Court of Appeal, Third Appellate District
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Boulware Eurie, Acting Presiding Justice; Mesiwala, J.; Wiseman, J.
JURISDICTION	California Court of Appeal, Third Appellate District
DECIDED	June 6, 2025
DOCKET	C102316
DISPOSITION	vacated
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Original proceeding in mandate reviewing the superior court's denial of Sacramento Television Stations Inc.'s California Public Records Act mandate petition.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court independently reviews questions of statutory interpretation and law, and reviews factual findings for substantial evidence.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published and certified for publication; precedential California Court of Appeal opinion.
PARTIES	Sacramento Television Stations Inc., doing business as CBS News Sacramento v. Superior Court of Placer County, City of Roseville, real party in interest

TOPICS

statutory interpretation

legislative history

writ of certiorari

appellate procedure

standard of review

PRACTICE AREAS

government transparency

public records

administrative law

appellate procedure

constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Government Code section 7923.625, subdivision (e)(1), requires disclosure of more than the brief recordings depicting the seconds immediately before and after officers discharged firearms at a person.
2. Whether the City established by clear and convincing evidence that additional disclosure would substantially interfere with an active investigation under Government Code section 7923.625, subdivision (a)(2).
3. Whether the City could rely on privacy redaction under section 7923.625, subdivision (b)(1), to withhold additional recordings in their entirety.
4. Whether the superior court must conduct an in camera review to determine the extent of additional disclosure required.

HOLDINGS

1. Government Code section 7923.625, subdivision (e)(1), requires disclosure of more than recordings limited to the seconds immediately before and after a peace officer's firearm discharge. Recordings must include sufficient surrounding context to permit a viewer to fully, completely, and accurately comprehend the events captured.
2. The superior court's finding that additional disclosure would substantially interfere with an active investigation was not supported by substantial evidence.
3. Under section 7923.625, subdivision (b)(1), an agency may alter a recording through redaction, blurring, or audio distortion to protect a depicted person's privacy, but may not withhold the entire recording under that provision merely because privacy interests are implicated. Complete withholding is governed by subdivision (b)(2) and requires a showing that redaction cannot adequately protect the privacy interest and that the interest outweighs disclosure.
4. The superior court must conduct further proceedings, including an in camera examination of the City's unedited recordings, to determine the precise amount of additional disclosure required.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“we conclude: (1) the superior court correctly determined that subdivision (e) required more disclosure than the City provided; (2) the superior court’s “active investigation” finding under subdivision (a) was not supported by substantial evidence; and therefore, (3) the superior court must determine the extent of additional disclosure required after conducting further proceedings, including an in camera review of the City’s recordings” (at 2)

“There is no reason to believe that, with the passage of Assembly Bill No. 748, the Legislature sought merely to require the disclosure of decontextualized, atomized data.” (at 20)

“The word “may” in subdivision (b)(1) does not grant to an agency the discretion to withhold a recording in its entirety; it grants to an agency the discretion to alter a recording to protect the privacy interests of someone depicted in the recording.” (at 24)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

On April 6, 2023, Roseville Police Department officers responded to a park after receiving information that a California Highway Patrol officer had been shot and that Eric J. Abril was armed and holding civilian hostages. Multiple Roseville officers fired at Abril, who was wounded and captured; both hostages suffered gunshot wounds, one fatally. The City released four 39-second body-camera clips and two radio-audio clips, but Sacramento Television Stations sought broader recordings from the officers' arrival through Abril's apprehension and the securing of the scene.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Sacramento Television Stations Inc. requested additional police body-camera, dashboard-camera, radio, and drone recordings relating to an April 6, 2023 officer-involved shooting. The Placer County Superior Court concluded that Government Code section 7923.625, subdivision (e), required more disclosure than the City had provided, but denied relief based on the active-investigation exemption in subdivision (a)(2). The Court of Appeal issued an order to show cause, granted the writ petition, vacated the superior court's ruling, and directed further proceedings including in camera review.

DISPOSITION

vacated

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

Issue a peremptory writ directing the Placer County Superior Court to vacate its October 2024 ruling that the active-investigation exemption applies and to conduct further proceedings consistent with the opinion, including an in camera examination of the City's recordings to determine the extent of additional disclosure required. Sacramento Television Stations is entitled to costs in the proceeding.

CASES CITED

- City of San Jose v. Superior Court, 2 Cal.5th 608, 615-617 (2017)
- Labor & Workforce Development Agency v. Superior Court, 19 Cal.App.5th 12, 25 (2018)
- Castañares v. Superior Court, 98 Cal.App.5th 295, 305-306, 313 (2023)
- Becerra v. Superior Court, 44 Cal.App.5th 897, 914-916, 930-931 (2020)
- In re Jennings, 34 Cal.4th 254, 264 (2004)
- North American Title Co. v. Superior Court, 17 Cal.5th 155, 178 (2024)
- Cleveland National Forest Foundation v. San Diego Assn. of Governments, 17 Cal.App.5th 413, 434 (2017)

- Coronado Police Officers Assn. v. Carroll, 106 Cal.App.4th 1001, 1005-1008 (2003)
- Grant-Burton v. Covenant Care, Inc., 99 Cal.App.4th 1361, 1379 (2002)
- Tharp v. Superior Court, 154 Cal.App.3d 215, 219 & fn. 8 (1984)
- People v. Holford, 203 Cal.App.4th 155, 179 (2012)
- California First Amendment Coalition v. Superior Court, 67 Cal.App.4th 159, 174 (1998)
- Munchkin, Inc. v. Tomy Int'l, Inc., 713 F.Supp.3d 452, 456 (N.D. Ill. 2024)
- State Dept. of Public Health v. Superior Court, 60 Cal.4th 940, 956 (2015)
- American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California v. Superior Court, 202 Cal.App.4th 55, 85 (2011)
- Pacific Merchant Shipping Assn. v. Board of Pilot Commissioners etc., 242 Cal.App.4th 1043, 1059 (2015)
- Tuolumne Jobs & Small Business Alliance v. Superior Court, 59 Cal.4th 1029, 1043 (2014)
- In re Firearm Cases, 126 Cal.App.4th 959, 986 (2005)
- Rancho Pauma Mutual Water Co. v. Yuima Municipal Water Dist., 239 Cal.App.4th 109, 118-119 (2015)
- Humane Society of U.S. v. Superior Court, 214 Cal.App.4th 1233, 1253, 1272-1273 (2013)
- Tarrant Bell Property, LLC v. Superior Court, 51 Cal.4th 538, 542 (2011)
- Erickson v. Superior Court, 55 Cal.App.4th 755, 759 (1997)