

SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS

Mayfield v. Reardon

SJC-13868 · No. SJC-13868 · Decided April 13, 2026

SUMMARY

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court affirmed the denial of Holly Mayfield’s petition for extraordinary relief under G. L. c. 211, § 3. The court held that Mayfield had adequate alternative remedies through ordinary appellate procedures, including seeking a ruling on her pending postjudgment motion in the Probate and Family Court and appealing any adverse decision. The court also concluded that S.J.C. Rule 2:21 did not apply because Mayfield challenged a final judgment.

CASE DETAILS

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COURT              | Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| JURISDICTION       | Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| DECIDED            | April 13, 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| DOCKET             | SJC-13868                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| DISPOSITION        | affirmed                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| PROCEDURAL POSTURE | Appeal from a single justice's denial without a hearing of a petition under G. L. c. 211, § 3, seeking extraordinary relief in connection with a divorce proceeding.                                                              |
| STANDARD OF REVIEW | The full court reviews only whether the single justice abused his or her discretion when exercising discretion not to reach the merits of a G. L. c. 211, § 3 petition because the petitioner had an adequate alternative remedy. |
| PRECEDENTIAL VALUE | Published opinion of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts.                                                                                                                                                                 |
| PARTIES            | Holly Mayfield v. Joseph Reardon, George Asack, Jr., Irena Wallach Inman, a justice of the Probate and Family Court Department                                                                                                    |

TOPICS

- writ of certiorari
- appellate procedure
- standard of review
- family law procedure
- divorce

PRACTICE AREAS

- family law
- appellate procedure
- civil procedure
- remedies
- guardianships

## QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the single justice abused his discretion by denying Mayfield's G. L. c. 211, § 3 petition on the ground that she had an adequate alternative remedy in the ordinary course of appeal.
2. Whether S.J.C. Rule 2:21 governed Mayfield's appeal from the single justice's judgment.
3. Whether the availability of a postjudgment motion seeking a ruling on the unresolved September 2024 motion, followed by an appeal from any adverse ruling, supplied an adequate alternative remedy.

## HOLDINGS

1. S.J.C. Rule 2:21 does not apply when the appellant challenges a final judgment.
2. A petitioner is not entitled to extraordinary relief when an adequate alternative remedy exists in the ordinary course of appeal.
3. The single justice did not err or abuse his discretion in denying Mayfield's petition because she had adequate alternative remedies in the ordinary course of appeal.

## KEY QUOTATIONS

*"In cases such as this one, where the single justice exercises discretion not to reach the merits of a petition, . . . the full court asks only whether the single justice abused his or her discretion in making that decision" (quotation and citation omitted)." (at 2)*

*"The single justice is not required to become involved if the petitioner has an adequate alternative remedy . . . ." (at 2)*

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Mayfield was the defendant in a divorce proceeding brought by Reardon, which had been consolidated with a complaint for separate support. A judgment of divorce nisi entered on September 12, 2024, and the Probate and Family Court later amended the judgment to provide for a special master to assist in placing the former marital home for sale. Mayfield challenged the appointment of a guardian ad litem and her obligation to pay part of the guardian's fees, and asserted that the Probate and Family Court had not ruled on an earlier motion raising those issues.

## PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Mayfield was the defendant in Reardon's divorce proceeding in the Probate and Family Court. After a judgment of divorce nisi and a later amended judgment concerning sale of the marital home, Mayfield filed postjudgment motions challenging, among other things, the appointment of a guardian ad litem and payment of guardian fees. She petitioned a single justice of the Supreme Judicial Court under G. L. c. 211, § 3, seeking relief from the amended judgment, recusal, transfer, a stay, direct appellate review, and fees. The single justice denied the petition because Mayfield had an adequate alternative remedy in the ordinary course of appeal and denied reconsideration. The full court affirmed.

## DISPOSITION

affirmed

#### CASES CITED

- Kim v. Newton Hous. Auth., 493 Mass. 1029, 1030 (2024)
- Goodwin v. Commonwealth, 483 Mass. 1011, 1012 (2019)
- Boone v. Commonwealth, 494 Mass. 1011, 1012-1013 (2024)
- Commonwealth v. Fontanez, 482 Mass. 22, 24 (2019)
- Aktas v. Aktas, 481 Mass. 1018, 1019 (2018)
- Lasher v. Leslie-Lasher, 474 Mass. 1003, 1004 (2016)
- Skandha v. Clerk of the Superior Court for Civil Business in Suffolk County, 472 Mass. 1017, 1019 (2015)

#### OPINION

Mayfield v. Reardon

PER CURIAM.

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SJC-13868

HOLLY MAYFIELD vs. JOSEPH REARDON & others.<sup>1</sup> April 13, 2026. Supreme Judicial Court, Superintendence of inferior courts. Divorce and Separation, Relief from judgment. Practice, Civil, Relief from judgment. The petitioner, Holly Mayfield, appeals from the judgment of a single justice of this court denying without a hearing her petition pursuant to G. L. c. 211, § 3, seeking extraordinary relief. We affirm. Mayfield was the defendant in a divorce proceeding brought by respondent Joseph Reardon in the Probate and Family Court.<sup>2</sup> On September 12, 2024, a judgment of divorce nisi entered, and Mayfield subsequently noticed her appeal. On September 19, 2024, she moved for permission to file a motion for relief from judgment, and she filed a copy of the proposed motion as well (September 2024 motion).<sup>3</sup> On October 17, 2024, Mayfield was granted permission to file the September 2024 motion, but the docket does not reflect that it was ever decided. In the September 2024 motion, Mayfield sought to vacate a prior order 1 George Asack, Jr.; Irena Wallach Inman; and a justice of the Probate and Family Court Department. 2 The divorce proceeding had been consolidated with a complaint for separate support. 3 Mayfield represents that in February 2023, an order issued requiring her to file such motions for leave to make filings in the action. 2 appointing a guardian ad litem, and she disputed that she should have to pay certain of the guardian's fees. On Reardon's motion, a judge of the Probate and Family Court amended the judgment on April 1, 2025, to provide terms under which a special master would

assist with placing for sale the parties' former marital home. Mayfield noticed her appeal from the amended judgment, and she moved to alter and then for relief from the amended judgment. These motions were denied. In one of these postjudgment motions, filed May 28, 2025, Mayfield again argued that the appointment of the guardian was improper, and she challenged the requirement that she pay a portion of the guardian's fees (May 2025 motion). In November 2025, Mayfield petitioned a single justice of this court for extraordinary relief pursuant to G. L. c. 211, § 3, asking the single justice for relief from the amended judgment, recusal of the Probate and Family Court judge who amended the judgment, transfer of the divorce proceeding to a different county, a stay of the underlying divorce proceeding pending resolution by the Appeals Court of her pending appeals, direct appellate review by this court, and costs and fees in connection with her petition. While Mayfield acknowledges that her appeal has been entered with respect to the amended judgment, she believes the failure of the Probate and Family Court judge to rule on the September 2024 motion has prevented her from filing a separate appeal as to the initial judgment of divorce. The single justice denied Mayfield's petition without reaching its merits on the ground that Mayfield had an adequate alternative remedy in the ordinary course of appeal, and he also denied both parties' requests for fees. Mayfield thereafter moved for reconsideration, arguing that she was unable to pursue an appeal because the Probate and Family Court judge had not ruled on the September 2024 motion. The single justice denied her motion for reconsideration. Presently before this court is Mayfield's appeal from the judgment of the single justice. Mayfield has filed a memorandum and appendix pursuant to S.J.C. Rule 2:21, as amended, 434 Mass. 1301 (2001). Rule 2:21 does not apply here, however, because Mayfield is challenging a final judgment. See *Kim v. Newton Hous. Auth.*, 493 Mass. 1029, 1030 (2024). Nevertheless, Mayfield is not entitled to relief because, as the single justice concluded, she had an adequate alternative remedy in the ordinary course of appeal. See, e.g., *Goodwin v. Commonwealth*, 483 Mass. 1011, 1012 (2019). "In cases such as this one, where the single justice exercises discretion not to reach the merits of a petition, . . . the full court asks only whether the single justice abused his or her discretion in making that decision" (quotation and citation omitted). *Boone v. Commonwealth*, 494 Mass. 1011, 1012-1013 (2024). "The single justice is not required to become involved if the petitioner has an adequate alternative remedy . . . ." *Commonwealth v. Fontanez*, 482 Mass. 22, 24 (2019). Here, Mayfield can appeal from the final judgment, that is, from the amended judgment of divorce.<sup>4</sup> See *Aktas v. Aktas*, 481 Mass. 1018, 1019 (2018). Indeed, she has done so. Nevertheless, Mayfield asserts that the Probate and Family Court judge's failure to rule on her September 2024 motion has prevented her from effecting an appeal from the initial judgment. Even so, Mayfield may file a further<sup>5</sup> postjudgment motion in the Probate and Family Court seeking a ruling on her September 2024 motion, and she may appeal from any adverse decision on such a motion. See *Lasher v. Leslie-Lasher*, 474 Mass. 1003, 1004 (2016). "We trust that" if such a motion "is []filed now, it will be docketed and promptly acted on." *Skandha v. Clerk of the Superior Court for Civil Business in Suffolk County*, 472 Mass. 1017, 1019 (2015). To the extent that Mayfield is required

to seek leave to file such a motion, we trust that it will be freely and promptly given. See *id.* In sum, Mayfield has adequate alternative remedies in the ordinary course of appeal, and the single justice did not err or abuse his discretion in denying Mayfield's petition. Judgment affirmed. The case was submitted on the papers filed, accompanied by a memorandum of law. Holly Mayfield, pro se. 4 As to Mayfield's request for direct appellate review, the proper procedure for such an application is described in Mass. R. A. P. 11, as appearing in 481 Mass. 1620 (2019). 5 On August 25, 2025, Mayfield filed a motion in the Probate and Family Court seeking assembly of a record despite the pendency of the September 2024 and May 2025 motions, and the May 2025 motion was denied the next day.