

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
FLORIDA, FORT MYERS DIVISION

**Andrew Bryant Sheets v. Matthew Woelk, in Personal Capacity; City
of Punta Gorda; and Cody Waldrop, in Personal Capacity**

Sheets · No. 2:25-cv-61-KCD-DNF · Decided February 2, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida denied Andrew Bryant Sheets’s motion for judicial notice of an adjudicative fact from a separate case involving the City of Punta Gorda. The Court held that Federal Rule of Evidence 201 permits notice of the existence and contents of another court’s order, but not treating its factual findings or legal conclusions as indisputably true in a separate action.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Fort Myers Division
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Fort Myers Division
DECIDED	February 2, 2026
DOCKET	2:25-cv-61-KCD-DNF
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved under Federal Rule of Evidence 201 for judicial notice of a legal ruling from a separate action involving the City of Punta Gorda. The district court denied the motion.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the requirements of Federal Rule of Evidence 201 governing judicial notice of adjudicative facts.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order; precedential status unknown
PARTIES	Andrew Bryant Sheets v. Matthew Woelk, in Personal Capacity, City of Punta Gorda, Cody Waldrop, in Personal Capacity

TOPICS

judicial notice

evidence

summary judgment

due process

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

evidence

civil procedure

constitutional law

civil rights

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court could take judicial notice under Federal Rule of Evidence 201 that a legal conclusion reached in a prior summary-judgment proceeding was an adjudicative fact binding in the present action.
2. Whether the court could judicially notice the factual findings or legal conclusions in an order from another proceeding as indisputably true, rather than merely notice the existence of the order and related filings.

HOLDINGS

1. A prior court's legal conclusion is not an adjudicative fact subject to judicial notice merely because it appears in a judicial order. Rule 201 does not permit a party to carry a legal conclusion from one lawsuit into another to avoid the party's evidentiary burden.
2. The court may take judicial notice that the prior order was issued and what the order said, but may not take judicial notice of the order's factual findings or legal conclusions as indisputably true for purposes of a separate case involving different parties and a different record.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"It is not, however, a mechanism for cutting and pasting legal conclusions from one lawsuit to another to bypass the evidentiary burden."

"A court may take judicial notice of a document filed in another court "not for the truth of the matters asserted in the other litigation, but rather to establish the fact of such litigation and related filings.""

"But we cannot take judicial notice of the factual findings or legal conclusions contained in that order as being indisputably true for the purposes of a separate case involving different parties and a different record."

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

In a prior case, the court granted or addressed summary judgment after concluding that the City had failed to produce evidence of a valid procedural avenue for appealing Sheets's trespass warning. In this action, Sheets sought to have that prior ruling treated as an adjudicative fact binding on the defendants. The court concluded that the prior ruling arose from a specific evidentiary record and could not establish the truth of factual findings or legal conclusions in this separate litigation.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Sheets sought judicial notice of a ruling in *Sheets v. City of Punta Gorda*, Case No. 2:24-cv-495-KCD-DNF, asserting that the prior ruling established as an adjudicative fact that the City's trespass-warning procedure violated the Fourteenth Amendment. The court explained that the prior ruling was made on summary judgment and did not establish facts or legal conclusions for purposes of this separate action involving a different record and parties.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- United States v. Jones, 29 F.3d 1549, 1553 (11th Cir. 1994)
- Awodiya v. Ross Univ. Sch. of Med., No. 18-CV-60482-KMM, 2018 WL 11472292, at *2 (S.D. Fla. June 22, 2018)
- Grayson v. Warden, Comm'r, Ala. DOC, 869 F.3d 1204, 1225 (11th Cir. 2017)
- Moon v. Newsome, 863 F.2d 835, 837 (11th Cir. 1989)

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