

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
ILLINOIS, PEORIA DIVISION

Oxford House, Inc.; Nicholas Madrigal; Travis Gough; Jared Galde;
Tara Hellickson; Michael Hellickson; Tanner Justice; Lauren Justice;
Richard Odorfer; Alexander Halenka; Layla Halenka; Graham
Reid; and Amy Aves v. City of Peoria

Oxford House · No. 1:23-cv-1406-JEH-RLH · Decided April 1, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois grants the City of Peoria’s motion to compel disclosure of communications withheld by Oxford House under the attorney-client privilege and common-interest doctrine. The court holds that the landlords did not have an attorney-client relationship with Oxford House’s general counsel, but preserves protection for communications directly involving counsel or internal employee communications concerning legal advice.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois, Peoria Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Ronald L. Hanna
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois, Peoria Division
DECIDED	April 1, 2026
DOCKET	1:23-cv-1406-JEH-RLH
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	During discovery in a Fair Housing Act action, the City of Peoria moved to compel Oxford House to disclose sixty-eight documents withheld under the attorney-client privilege and common-interest doctrine.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court evaluated the asserted privileges and the adequacy of the privilege log under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 26(b)(5)(A).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown

TOPICS

attorney client privilege

privilege

discovery dispute

civil procedure

civil rights

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

evidence

civil rights

municipal law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether communications between Oxford House's landlords and its nonlawyer employees were protected by the attorney-client privilege based on an implied attorney-client relationship between the landlords and Oxford House's general counsel.
2. Whether the common-interest doctrine independently protected the communications or prevented waiver when the underlying communications were not privileged.
3. Whether Oxford House's privilege log described the withheld documents sufficiently to permit the City to assess the privilege claims under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 26(b)(5)(A).

HOLDINGS

1. No implied attorney-client relationship existed because the landlords did not submit confidential information directly to Oxford House's lawyers, did not retain them, and lacked a reasonable basis to believe that Oxford House's general counsel was acting as their attorney.
2. The common-interest doctrine did not independently protect the communications because it is a non-waiver rule, not an independent privilege, and the underlying communications were never privileged.
3. Oxford House's privilege log contained enough information to allow the City to assess the privilege objections because it identified the senders and recipients and the nature of the communications.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The mere fact that an employee reports to or communicates with a company’s general counsel does not make that employee the general counsel’s agent.” (Discussion § I)

“And because the communications at issue were not privileged to begin with, the common-interest doctrine cannot supply an independent justification to withhold them.” (Discussion § I)

“Oxford House must produce all communications between the landlords and its employees that it has withheld based on the common interest doctrine.” (Conclusion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Oxford House operates substance-free housing through homes leased from third-party landlords, including seven homes in Peoria. After residents complained, the City issued zoning citations to the landlords, who forwarded the notices to Oxford House employees responsible for the Peoria area. Those employees sent the notices to Oxford House's general counsel, and Oxford House withheld communications involving landlords and nonlawyer employees under the attorney-client privilege and common-interest doctrine.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Oxford House served a privilege log identifying sixty-eight withheld communications in response to the City's requests for production. The City moved to compel disclosure, primarily challenging communications among landlords and Oxford House's nonlawyer employees. The court granted the motion in part and ordered production of communications between landlords and Oxford House employees withheld under the common-interest doctrine, while preserving protection for qualifying direct communications involving Oxford House's general counsel.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Sandra T.E. v. S. Berwyn Sch. Dist. 100, 600 F.3d 612, 618 (7th Cir. 2010)
- United States v. BDO Seidman, LLP, 492 F.3d 806, 815 (7th Cir. 2007)
- Miller UK Ltd. v. Caterpillar, Inc., 17 F. Supp. 3d 711, 731 (N.D. Ill. 2014)
- United Nat'l Recs., Inc. v. MCA, Inc., 106 F.R.D. 39, 40 (N.D. Ill. 1985)
- In re Walsh, 623 F.2d 489, 493 (7th Cir. 1980)
- Hernandez v. Guevara, No. 23-cv-15375, 2025 WL 3507339, at *2 (N.D. Ill. Oct. 28, 2025)
- Black Rush Mining, LLC v. Black Panther Mining, 840 F. Supp. 2d 1085, 1090 (N.D. Ill. 2012)
- Domanus v. Lewicki, No. 08 C 4922, 2012 WL 6568227, at *5 (N.D. Ill. Dec. 14, 2012)
- United States v. Chi. Baseball Holdings, LLC, No. 22 CV 3639, 2024 WL 6988883, at *8 (N.D. Ill. Mar. 1, 2024)
- Jenkins v. Bartlett, 487 F.3d 482, 490 (7th Cir. 2007)
- United States v. Schwimmer, 892 F.2d 237, 244 (2d Cir. 1989)
- Equity Residential v. Kendall Risk Mgmt., Inc., 246 F.R.D. 557, 568 (N.D. Ill. 2007)
- Towne Place Condo. Ass'n v. Philadelphia Indem. Ins. Co., 284 F. Supp. 3d 889, 896 (N.D. Ill. 2018)
- BankDirect Cap. Fin., LLC v. Cap. Premium Fin., Inc., 326 F.R.D. 176, 180 (N.D. Ill. 2018)