



# CITY OF PLAINFIELD

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY HALL  
515 WATCHUNG AVENUE  
PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY 07060  
(908) 753-3310 (OFFICE)  
(908) 753-3634 (FAX)

Email: [adrian.mapp@plainfieldnj.gov](mailto:adrian.mapp@plainfieldnj.gov)



**Adrian O. Mapp**  
Mayor

**Media Contact**  
Jazz Clayton-Hunt  
908-226-2507

## **Appellate Court Overturns Verdict Against Plainfield and the Mayor, Supreme Court Refuses to Hear Appeal.**

### **The City of Plainfield & Mayor Mapp Win with NJ Supreme Court's Refusal to hear Spriggs Appeal**

Plainfield, NJ June 7th, 2022 – On January 3rd, 2022, in a lawsuit that should never have been allowed to go to trial, the Appellate Court of New Jersey overturned the lower court's verdict and threw out the guilty verdict against Mayor Adrian O. Mapp and the City of Plainfield. The lower court ruled against the Mayor and the City in a jury trial. It assessed a fine of \$500,000 plus attorney's fee in the suit brought against the Mayor and the City by former Chief Municipal Public Defender (CMPD) Joy Spriggs. The ruling of the trial court enabled Joy Spriggs to record a personal judgment against the Mayor for \$500,000.

Ms. Spriggs served first as a municipal public defender for the City of Plainfield from 2001 to 2007. In 2007 she was appointed Chief Municipal Public Defender. Chief Municipal Public Defenders are appointed, statutorily, for a one-year term subject to annual re-appointment at the discretion of the Mayor. Spriggs was reappointed each year until 2017, when another attorney was appointed to replace her. Ms. Spriggs filed a lawsuit alleging gender discrimination because the person appointed as the new Chief Municipal Public Defender was a male.

Although the lower courts found in favor of Ms. Spriggs, awarding her attorney's fees and costs, upon appeal, the Appellate Court found that there was no basis for her claim of gender bias and reversed the lower court's decision. Ms. Spriggs then filed an appeal to the NJ Supreme Court. On June 6th, 2022, the NJ Supreme Court refused to hear the appeal, ending Sprigg's frivolous lawsuit.

*As stated in the court's summary, "Plaintiff did not establish defendants' reasons for the non-reappointment were pretextual. Her sole proffer that defendants' reasons were pretextual was that plaintiff's successor was male. In light of the presumptive one-year term accorded under the statute, and the lack of any other evidence, that scant proffer of pretext was insufficient to support plaintiff's claim of gender discrimination. Therefore, we reverse the denial of defendants' summary judgment motion. In light of our ruling, we need not consider any further arguments regarding the trial or raised in the cross-appeal."*

Under the City's charter, the Mayor, with the advice and consent of the City council, has the power to appoint public defenders and the CMPD. Each department is headed by a director, appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the council. Each department head serves during the Mayor's term of office who makes the appointment or until a replacement is identified. The CMPD is a department head.

During her deposition, Ms. Spriggs acknowledged her appointments were only for one year, and the Mayor had the right to appoint a person of his choice for the position. Nevertheless, Ms. Spriggs chose to file the lawsuit even with the full knowledge that her appointment was limited to one year, on an annual basis, at the discretion of the Mayor.

The Appellate court's ruling in overturning the lower court's decision is a victory for mayors across the state who may face similar frivolous lawsuits from unscrupulous attorneys who feel entitled to be reappointed as public defenders and or prosecutors. The NJ Supreme Court's refusal to hear Sprigg's appeal sends a powerful message to her and others who would waste taxpayer money and time by forcing municipalities to defend unfounded discrimination claims.

"I will always make decisions that I deem to be in the city's best interest," said Mayor Adrian O. Mapp. He continued by commenting, "no appointment is for life, and as the needs of the City continue to change, the personnel that serves the public are also subject to change. I am profoundly glad that this unfounded and frivolous lawsuit didn't hurt the pockets of our Plainfield taxpayers. It should be a lesson learned for the Plaintiff and other like-minded individuals."

#####

*The City of Plainfield, also known by its iconic nickname "The Queen City," is 153-years-old, home to 54,586 individuals, according to the 2021 United States Census. The City of Plainfield is the third-largest city in Union County in terms of population. The current Mayor of the beautiful Queen City is Mayor Adrian O. Mapp, serving a historical, never-before-seen, consecutive third term. For more information on the City of Plainfield, visit online at [www.plainfieldnj.gov](http://www.plainfieldnj.gov), Facebook at [www.facebook.com/cityofplainfieldnj](https://www.facebook.com/cityofplainfieldnj), Instagram at @cityofplainfieldnj, and Twitter at @cityofplainfld.*