

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLORADO**

Civil Action Number: 1:24-cv-03517-PAB-KAS

ANITA SPRINGSTEEN

Plaintiff,

v.

CITY OF LAKEWOOD,
KATHY HODGSON,
ADAM PAUL,
JESLIN SHAHREZAEI,
REBEKAH STEWART,
CHIEF ED LOAR.

Defendants.

PLAINTIFF’S AMENDED COMPLAINT

TO: The Defendants above-named and their respective attorneys. This is an action for damages brought pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §1983, First and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution. Plaintiff also brings state law claims.

COMES NOW Plaintiff, Anita Springsteen (hereinafter “Plaintiff”) *pro se*, and respectfully submits this Amended Complaint against the Defendants City of Lakewood, Kathy Hodgson, Adam Paul, Jeslin Shahrezaei, Rebekah Stewart, Interim Chief Ed Loar, and alleges and avers as follows:

INTRODUCTION

This is an action for money damages brought against Defendants on behalf of Plaintiff Anita Springsteen, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

A. PLAINTIFF’S INFORMATION

Plaintiff was at all relevant times, a resident of the State of Colorado residing in in Lakewood, Colorado. Plaintiff’s address is c/o Springsteen Law Firm, LLC, P.O. Box 19700, Denver, Colorado 80219.

B. DEFENDANTS’ INFORMATION

At the time of the incident that is the subject of this Complaint, Defendants within the City of Lakewood were acting within the course and scope of their employment and under the color of state law.

Defendant 1: City of Lakewood (“Defendant City of Lakewood” or “Lakewood”) is a municipal corporation constituted under the laws of Colorado, with its principal place of business located at 480 S. Allison Parkway, Lakewood, CO 80226. Defendant City of Lakewood has final policy-making authority over its staff, police officers, elected officials, and city employees - specifically including the individual Defendants named herein.

Defendant 2: Kathy Hodgson, is an individual and resident of Colorado, and at all times relevant to this complaint, was City Manager of the City of Lakewood, with offices located at 480 S. Allison Parkway, Lakewood, CO 80226. Defendant Hodgson is sued in her individual and official capacity.

Defendant 3: Adam Paul, is an individual and resident of Colorado, and at all times relevant to this complaint, was Mayor of the City of Lakewood, with offices located at 480 S. Allison Parkway, Lakewood, CO 80226. Defendant Paul is sued in his individual and official capacity.

Defendant 4: Jeslin Shahrezaei, is an individual and resident of Colorado, and at all times relevant to this complaint, was a City Councilor in the City of Lakewood, with offices located at 480 S. Allison Parkway, Lakewood,

CO 80226. Defendant Shahrezaei is sued in her individual and official capacity.

Defendant 5: Rebekah Stewart, is an individual and resident of Colorado, and at all times relevant to this complaint, was a City Councilor in the City of Lakewood, with offices located at 480 S. Allison Parkway, Lakewood, CO 80226. Defendant Stewart is sued in her individual and official capacity.

Defendant 6: Chief Ed Loar, Lakewood Police Department is an individual and resident of Colorado, and at all times relevant to this complaint was Interim Chief of Police of Lakewood Police Department, 445 S. Allison Parkway, Lakewood, CO 80226, 303-987-7111. Defendant Loar is sued in his individual and official capacity.

C. JURISDICTION

1. The purpose of this action is to redress and restrain acts or practices by Defendants that federal law deems unlawful.

2. The basis for the original jurisdiction of the federal court is that there are federal questions pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (claims arising under the Constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States) and §1343(a)(3) and (4) (civil rights). This action also arises under the United States Constitution and laws of the United States and is brought pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. This includes, but is not limited to, claims under the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution.

3. Jurisdiction supporting Plaintiff's claim for attorney fees and costs is conferred by 42 U.S.C. § 1988.

4. Venue is proper in this district based on 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b), as Defendants are residents of this district and all of the acts or occurrences giving rise to these claims

occurred in this district and within the State of Colorado.

5. Plaintiff has served notice of her state law claims in compliance with Colorado Revised Statutes.

D. NATURE OF THIS ACTION

This case arises out of the actions of Defendants, individually and in concert, (i) in depriving Plaintiff Springsteen of her rights under the First Amendment by attempting to push her out of her elected position, to keep her from running for office again, and to silence her from speaking on behalf of her constituents; (ii) by retaliating against Plaintiff Springsteen for speaking out about matters of public concern and placing unconstitutional conditions on her speech; and (iii) by discriminating against Plaintiff Springsteen on the basis of her gender and color in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment, and retaliating against her for opposing the discrimination of others

E. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

Anita Springsteen was an Elected Official in Lakewood Subjected to Constant Harassment and Death Threats

6. Anita Springsteen served on Lakewood City Council from 2019 to 2023 as a duly elected representative in Ward 3.

7. During that period of time, she was subjected to constant harassment and denial of her First Amendment rights by Mayor Adam Paul, other city councilors, the City Manager, and city staff.

8. Repeatedly, Ms. Springsteen was cut off, muted, or removed from city meetings on

Zoom – particularly during Covid. This occurred whenever the mayor or city manager did not like what Ms. Springsteen had to say, which was in obvious retaliation for the fact that she was outspoken about government corruption and demanded transparency.

9. Much of the harassment stemmed from the fact that Ms. Springsteen was a woman, and because she was Latina. For instance, Ms. Springsteen was blocked from writing in Council Corner in the “Looking at Lakewood” quarterly newsletter for over a year. Ms. Springsteen objected that this was because Ward 3 had the highest number of Hispanic constituents, and also because she was Hispanic. But it was also a First Amendment issue because Ms. Springsteen wanted to write the truth about the City government and was being prevented from doing so.

10. In March of 2022, Ms. Springsteen’s house was broken into and flooded while she was away in Washington D.C. on city business at the National League of Cities conference. Mayor Paul very publicly announced that Ms. Springsteen would be away. Although it would be impossible to prove, the juxtaposition of signs of a break-in and flood and other breaches in security made it appear that the flood was done purposely to force Ms. Springsteen’s resignation. Her house was completely destroyed by the flood that went on for days while she was gone. This distracted Ms. Springsteen from her position on Council and made her fearful to leave her home during public meetings.

11. Shortly thereafter, Ms. Springsteen received a death threat through her city email on March 28, 2022. The email came to Ms. Springsteen’s city email address, and appeared to have come from Mayor Paul’s city email address. The City claimed that it was not actually

from Mayor Paul, but from a Russian VPN that spoofed the mayor's email. However, when the head of IT at the City was later asked about this during a City Council meeting, she stated that she knew nothing about it.

12. Although Ms. Springsteen requested that the City of Lakewood and Lakewood Police Department investigate her death threat and break-in, City Manager Kathy Hodgson was unconcerned and failed to act as a reasonable person would to protect one of her city councilors. In fact, she never communicated with Ms. Springsteen about how she would be protected and appeared to make no efforts to provide protection or investigation.

13. Because Ms. Springsteen made a police report to the Lakewood Police Department, CSI was sent out to investigate break-in and two detectives interviewed Ms. Springsteen. However, upon information and belief the detectives did not follow up on leads that Ms. Springsteen gave them about possible suspects, did not work with the FBI, did not obtain proper IT assistance in tracking the email, and did very little to solve the crime.¹

14. In June of 2022, Ms. Springsteen attended the Colorado Municipal League conference and spoke with City Manager Kathy Hodgson at a public event about why the City had failed to adequately investigate a death threat and home invasion of one of the city officials. Ms. Hodgson feigned ignorance about details of the case, admitted that she

¹ It should be noted that the City would "sic" certain citizens to harass outspoken councilors on social media. I told the police that some of these people should be investigated – especially one with an IT and software background who could have hacked the City's email system. Upon information and belief, they investigated no one.

had not done anything about it, and promised to follow up. However, she never did follow up and nothing further happened to protect Ms. Springsteen or investigate her case.

15. Ms. Springsteen recorded that conversation with Kathy Hodgson to be able to prove that the City Manager gave no consideration to an elected official's safety. During that conversation Ms. Springsteen also advocated to hire a woman or person of color as police chief, which Ms. Hodgson would not commit to. Ms. Hodgson also admitted to having issues with Mayor Paul and seemed to blame Paul for enlisting a news station to push for Ms. Springsteen's resignation in 2020.

16. In July 2022, a dead animal was left under the front wheel of Councilwoman Springsteen's car, which is a known way to threaten people. Although Ms. Springsteen reported this as an obvious threat to her life, the Lakewood Police again attempted to downplay the threat. They claimed Ms. Springsteen must have run the animal over (although there was no sign of that, and video footage of Springsteen parking shows that's not the case). Again - the City did not take threats to a public official seriously.

17. In approximately September of 2022, Ms. Springsteen asked for a copy of the police reports surrounding her death threat and break-in. She knew this would prove that the Lakewood Police Department had done almost nothing to investigate her death threat.

18. Interim Chief Ed Loar informed Ms. Springsteen by email that if she asked for those reports to be released as a city councilor, this would also release them to the public. He said if she asked for them as a citizen, they would be redacted and she would have to pay for them. So the City was preventing Ms. Springsteen from seeing the complete police

reports about her own break-in by implying they would be publicly released.

19. Because of concerns about safety, Ms. Springsteen opted not to request the reports be released.

20. But on December 4, 2022, Ms. Springsteen served the City with a Notice of Claim under the Governmental Immunity Act, in part for its failure to adequately investigate her death threat as an elected official. She additionally put out a press release regarding the Notice.

21. On December 5, 2022, a reporter with the Jefferson Transcript called Ms. Springsteen to talk about her death threat. He informed Ms. Springsteen that he had strangely already spoken with Mayor Adam Paul and Councilor Jeslin Shahrezaei earlier that day regarding the death threats and Ms. Springsteen's Notice. Ms. Springsteen later found that her death threat had been minimized by Mayor Paul and by Shahrezaei during their interviews.

22. An Executive Session regarding the contract renewal for City Manager Kathy Hodgson was scheduled for the evening of Monday, December 5, 2022. Ms. Springsteen attended that meeting in person, which nobody expected (Springsteen always appeared virtually after the flood). That Executive Session never took place because four city councilors voted not to go into Executive Session, and so there was no supermajority. This made the mayor, city manager, and the rest of the council livid.

23. Those four councilors (including Springsteen) believed that the City Manager's contract should be discussed in public for the sake of transparency – as she is one of the

highest paid city managers in the state (she is now reportedly paid approximately \$465,000, which is more than the President of the United States).

24. The City then had to hold a public meeting via Zoom on December 19, 2022 to discuss the renewal of the City Manager's contract. The establishment officials did not appreciate that.

25. During that meeting, Mayor Adam Paul muted three city councilors (Charlie Able, Rich Olver, and Ms. Springsteen) and prevented them from speaking regarding the City Manager's contract renewal, which was of significant public interest. Ms. Springsteen was one of the councilors who was muted during this meeting. Her First Amendment rights were violated, as they were regularly violated during council meetings. The Colorado Freedom of Information Coalition published an article about this meeting.

<https://www.bing.com/search?q=CFOIC%20adam%20paul&qs=n&form=QBRE&sp=-1&ghc=1&lq=0&pq=cfoic%20adam%20paul&sc=10-15&sk=&cvid=9497547C57104B54A3808AD8CDAA7C0C&ghsh=0&ghacc=0&ghpl=>

26. Activists were also silenced in relation to the City Manager's contract renewal. An activist named Desiree Gonzalez, who often supported the Councilors through social media who wanted transparency, was arrested and thrown in jail right after the Executive Session where Mayor Paul inexplicably brought her up.² Mayor Paul and Councilor Shahrezaei accused Gonzalez of sending Council threatening emails. But four of the ten City

² Gonzalez is also a Latina woman, and she and Councilor Springsteen often advocated for the rights of women and people of color.

Councilors did not find Gonzalez's emails to be threats and thought they were free speech. Those councilors were not interviewed by the District Attorney.

27. District Attorney Alexis King continues to push this prosecution after three years, even though Gonzalez (who is now a Lakewood City Council candidate) already spent a year in jail on a \$250,000 cash only bond. Ms. King should have enlisted a special prosecutor, as she contributed to Mayor Paul's campaign and received contributions from Councilor Shahrezaei - and was therefore not unbiased in the prosecution. This is government corruption at its worst, and is protecting the City of Lakewood's attempts to silence people.

28. In January 2023, the City Council was set for their annual retreat. Ms. Springsteen asked for a virtual meeting accommodation since the City would not investigate or keep her safe during public meetings. Councilor Stewart criticized Ms. Springsteen and was resistant to an easy virtual option.³

29. But Councilor Shahrezaei went farther to silence and intimidate a fellow councilor. She requested that the police reports regarding Ms. Springsteen's death threat and flood be publicly released. Although Ms. Shahrezaei did not make a CCJRA or CORA request (as the City always required from Ms. Springsteen to obtain any kind of information, demonstrating unequal treatment) – the reports were released in full without redaction to

³ It should be noted that Councilor Stewart also defamed Councilor Springsteen when speaking with the District Attorney about Gonzalez. She attempted to blame Springsteen for Gonzalez's communications, in an effort to silence and intimidate a fellow Councilor.

the public and to the press.⁴

30. Although Chief Loar had advised Ms. Springsteen not to ask for the release of the reports for her own protection, he released these reports to Councilor Shahrezaei upon her request anyway without any warning to Ms. Springsteen.

31. There was no reason for Councilor Sharezaei to request that such private information be released about another councilor at that point in time other than to place Ms. Springsteen and her family in jeopardy, to retaliate, and to be spiteful and vindictive. It was done as part of the ongoing effort to threaten and silence Ms. Springsteen and force her to resign, and to abandon any future plans to pursue re-election.

32. In fact, the reports contained items that did place Ms. Springsteen and her family in serious jeopardy in violation of the law – which caused Ms. Springsteen to have to pursue private security measures and which caused severe emotional distress for her entire family.

33. Upon information and belief, Councilor Stewart and Councilor Shahrezaei worked together to make this vindictive request that placed a fellow elected official in danger.

34. Also during this period of time in early 2023, District Attorney Alexis King interviewed multiple councilors regarding Desiree Gonzalez and her alleged email threats. However, Ms. King’s office carefully avoided interviewing the four councilors (including Springsteen) who did not find Ms. Gonzalez’s words to be threats. Interestingly, those

⁴ Shahrezaei claimed to have a similar death threat emailed to her in relation to a Council meeting about 2nd Amendment Rights. The City would never release a copy of that email through CORA or CCJRA saying they were protecting her and investigating, but wouldn’t release it even after investigation – yet another example of unequal treatment.

were the same city councilors who wanted transparency regarding the City Manager's contract and the same ones who regularly questioned staff on behalf of their constituents. Conveniently for the City Manager, the Gonzalez debacle took attention away from the government overreach, which was forcing a vote to extend the City Manager's contract without any real public input.

35. Gonzalez's arrest also took attention away from the fact that Ms. Springsteen had filed a Notice of Claim against the City just days before the arrest. Gonzalez's arrest was another way to silence and intimidate Springsteen.

36. Putting an activist/influencer in jail because she was effective at helping Ms. Springsteen and other Latinas to be heard publicly and on social media was yet another vicious way of silencing Ms. Springsteen – and violating her First Amendment rights.⁵

37. Repeatedly throughout the next year of 2023, Ms. Springsteen continued to be muted and cut off from speaking by Mayor Paul and by the City staff in various ways.⁶ Just as she had been muted and cut off from speaking during her entire tenure on Council.⁷

⁵ It should be noted that Ms. Gonzalez is now running for Lakewood City Council in Ward 4, despite these years of abuse that she took from these bad actors and the year of suffering she endured in the Jeffco jail – not convicted of anything.

⁶ There are numerous examples of Ms. Springsteen being muted or her video feed being cut off altogether. On one occasion in 2023, Mayor Paul expelled Ms. Springsteen from the Zoom permanently so that she could not sign back in at all.

⁷ At one point, Mayor Adam Paul attempted to illegally obtain a censure of Councilor Springsteen from the state Independent Ethics Committee without approval of Council. The IEC immediately rejected the filing, but Mayor Paul did not disclose that for over 6 weeks. It should also be noted that Mayor Paul and city staff came up with a "censure" for councilors who spoke up for transparency and put it in place to punish Springsteen and those who spoke up. The Mayor began to read the censure clause before every meeting to intimidate people from exercising First Amendment rights.

38. Near the end of Ms. Springsteen's term on Council, she attended a couple of Council meetings in person.

39. At one of the last meetings in October 2023, not only did Mayor Paul mute Ms. Springsteen and cut her off from speaking on her mic – he threatened her on the dais. Mayor Paul stated the full name of Ms. Springsteen's boyfriend and then muttered something further. When Ms. Springsteen asked him what he said, Mayor Paul said, "You heard me." This was clearly a threat meant to intimidate Ms. Springsteen and to keep her from running for Council again. There was no other reason to bring personal relationships into a public meeting.

40. Mayor Paul was well aware that during Ms. Springsteen's time on Council in January 2020, her boyfriend was nearly killed by the Lakewood Police – in what was the first attempt to intimidate Ms. Springsteen into resigning her Council seat. Her boyfriend was forcibly injected with ketamine, which caused him to quit breathing. He nearly died. He was also given bogus charges that were all later dismissed – demonstrating a pattern of the City going after people who were close to Springsteen.

41. The City was responsible for forcibly administering ketamine on Councilor Springsteen's boyfriend within two months of her tenure on Council to threaten and intimidate her off of Council. The City was sued over this egregious violation of civil rights, but qualified immunity protected the officers.⁸

⁸ The City Attorney and staff used this incident to keep Springsteen from having access to any litigation reports involving the police for nearly her entire time on Council, even after she was no

42. About five months subsequent to this terrifying event, Ms. Springsteen had gone to City Manager Hodgson about a neighborhood issue. Instead of helping Ms. Springsteen, Ms. Hodgson either called a news station herself or informed Mayor Paul about events and he called the news station (Hodgson implied it was Mayor Paul who did this). A false news report came out regarding events surrounding the ketamine incident. Mayor Paul used this report to attempt to get Ms. Springsteen to resign.

43. Like the many other horrific things that were done to Ms. Springsteen, this did not work. Instead, Ms. Springsteen successfully fought for HB21-1251, the state legislation that forced law enforcement to stop using or influencing the use of ketamine on suspects.

44. However, this is another example of how Ms. Springsteen's First Amendment rights were repeatedly violated and how she was targeted while she was on Council.

45. Ms. Springsteen was a staunch advocate for People of Color while on Council. She requested the City Manager consider hiring a woman or a Person of Color for the police chief position and asked for more diversity in the city work force. Ms. Springsteen asked for statistics on arrests of Blacks and Latinos within the City. Ms. Springsteen advocated for the use of body cams due to the unbalanced statistics on arrests of people of color – and was able to move the date up by a year when the police force obtained body cams.

46. It was apparent that some of the abuse Ms. Springsteen faced from city officials was

longer involved in any way with the civil rights lawsuit against the City. No other Councilor was denied access to police litigation reports – yet another example of unequal treatment and punishment for pursuing civil rights.

in retaliation for her advocacy for People of Color and to silence her on those issues. It was also apparent that Ms. Springsteen was not treated with equal importance as other people on Council who were not Hispanic or women. When others were allegedly threatened, the City made a big show of sending police to protect them. However, Ms. Springsteen was not offered the same protection with regard to her death threat and break-in.

47. Additionally, Mayor Paul often used harassing language about Ms. Springsteen being a woman and treated her with no respect or dignity. When Ms. Springsteen made a complaint and asked for an investigation of this treatment, the City only provided a rigged process in violation of the Charter. The investigation was never completed.

48. Many of the actions of city officials were obviously because Ms. Springsteen was a woman and Latina, and because she was an outspoken advocate on behalf of People of Color, and were in violation of her Fourteenth Amendment rights.⁹

F. VIOLATIONS ALLEGED

49. As to each of the following claims for relief, paragraphs 1 through 48 above are incorporated by reference and re-alleged as if fully set forth in each separate claim.

⁹ Ms. Springsteen was very outspoken about the death of an elderly Black woman named Patricia Dilworth, who was found in a drainpipe on 6th and Wadsworth. In fact, Ms. Springsteen wrote about her and the many questions she had about the lack of police investigation into the death, the video showing Patricia was abducted, the harassment by police of the neighbor who had the video, and the failure to rule the death a homicide in the Looking at Lakewood newsletter. Ms. Springsteen faced significant backlash and threats from the City for asking these questions.

FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF

**Violation of the First Amendment as Incorporated in the Fourteenth
Amendment to the United States Constitution
Pursuant to 42 §U.S.C. 1983**

50. At all times relevant to the allegations of this Complaint, Defendants were a municipality and city officials part of that municipality, and at all times relevant to this complaint were acting under color of state law.

51. In taking the actions described above, depriving Ms. Springsteen from exercising her rights under the First Amendment to the US Constitution and especially by silencing and retaliating against her - Defendants, acting individually and together, violated Ms. Springsteen's rights under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, as incorporated by the 14th Amendment.

52. Defendants took these actions knowing they were unlawful or in reckless disregard of their unlawfulness.

53. Defendant's actions caused harm to Springsteen, which harm Springsteen seeks to remedy through action authorized under 42 USC 1983.

SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF

Violation of the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution

54. Plaintiff hereby incorporates all other paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully set forth herein.

55. At all times relevant to the allegations in this Complaint, Defendants were part of a municipality and city officials at all times relevant to this complaint were acting under color of state law.

56. In taking actions described above, especially the actions of treating Ms. Springsteen differently on the basis of her sex and color, and retaliating against her for opposing discrimination against herself and others, Defendants acting individually and together violated Springsteen's rights under equal protection and due process of the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution.

57. Defendants took these actions knowing they were unlawful or in reckless disregard of their unlawfulness.

58. Defendant's actions caused harm to Springsteen, which harm Springsteen seeks to remedy through action authorized under 42 USC 1983.

THIRD CLAIM FOR RELIEF

(Conspiracy to Violate Constitutional Rights)

59. Plaintiff hereby incorporates all other paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully set forth herein.

60. At all times relevant to the allegations in this Complaint, Defendants were part of a municipality and city officials at all times relevant to this complaint were acting under color of state law.

61. In taking actions described above, especially the actions of acting in concert for the purpose of depriving Ms. Springsteen of her First Amendment rights and her ability to run

for office again and discriminating against her on the basis of her gender and color, Defendants violated Springsteen's rights under the First Amendment and the equal protection and due process clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

62. Defendants took these actions knowing they were unlawful or in reckless disregard of their unlawfulness.

63. Defendant's actions caused harm to Springsteen, which harm Springsteen seeks to remedy through action authorized under 42 USC 1983.

E. PRAYER FOR RELIEF

A. WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that this honorable Court enter judgment in favor of the Plaintiff on her respective claims and against each of the Defendants, jointly and/or severally, and grant relief as allowed by law and equity. Plaintiff requests that this Court award, adjudge and decree that:

(1) The conduct alleged is violative of federal law and of Springsteen's rights thereunder.

(2) In accordance with federal law,

(a) Defendants pay to Springsteen an amount – the exact total of which is presently undetermined – comprised of

(I) The damages she has sustained and damages she will sustain in the future as a result of Defendants' violations, economic, emotional, constitutional,

and reputational, and

(II) Exemplary or punitive damages, as allowed under law.

(b) Ms. Springsteen be awarded her costs of suit, including reasonable attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §1988 and any other applicable federal or state law;

(c) Ms. Springsteen be awarded pre and post judgement interest on the above; and

B. Ms. Springsteen have such other, further, and different relief as this Court deems just.

PLAINTIFF DEMANDS A TRIAL TO A JURY ON ALL ISSUES SO TRIABLE

In accordance with Fed.R. Civ.P. 38(b), Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury.

Respectfully submitted this 19th day of March 2025.

/s/ Anita Springsteen
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