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STATE OF MICHIGAN

COURT OF APPEALS

WHITEGATE CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION, Plaintiff-Appellant, v MICHELLE SANCHAGRIN, Trustee of the MICHELLE T. SANCHAGRIN REVOCABLE LIVING TRUST, Defendant-Appellee.	UNPUBLISHED November 16, 2026 1:33 PM No. 375052 Ingham Circuit Court LC No. 2023-000441-CH

Before: GARRETT, P.J., and LETICA and TREBILCOCK, JJ.

PER CURIAM.

In this interlocutory appeal, plaintiff, Whitegate Condominium Association (Whitegate), appeals by delayed leave granted[1] the circuit court's order transferring this case to the district court on the basis that the circuit court lacked subject-matter jurisdiction to decide the dispute. Because the circuit court's determination was erroneous, and the district court lacks jurisdiction to grant the injunctive relief requested, we reverse and remand for further proceedings.

I. BACKGROUND

The Michelle T. Sanchagrin Revocable Living Trust is the record owner of a condominium unit in the Whitegate Condominiums complex. Whitegate filed this action against defendant, Michelle Sanchagrin, trustee of the trust, alleging that the trust violated Whitegate's bylaws by replacing the unit's windows without obtaining the written consent of Whitegate's board of directors. Whitegate sought injunctive relief requiring Sanchagrin to restore the unit to its previous condition or allowing Whitegate to restore the unit to its previous condition at the trust's expense.

[1] *Whitegate Condo Ass'n v Sanchagrin*, unpublished order of the Court of Appeals, entered September 10, 2025 (Docket No 375052).

Sanchagrin moved for summary disposition under MCR 2.116(C)(4), arguing that the circuit court lacked subject-matter jurisdiction because the amount in controversy failed to satisfy the $25,000 threshold for circuit court jurisdiction. Alternatively, Sanchagrin argued that the case should be transferred to the district court. The circuit court held a hearing on the motion and determined that the monetary damages to remedy the alleged violation would be below the $25,000 jurisdictional threshold. The court also determined that Whitegate's allegations involving equitable remedies were insufficient to compel the court to retain jurisdiction of the case, reasoning as follows:

> MCL 600.8315 states that the District Court has jurisdiction and power to make any order properly to effectuate the District Court's jurisdiction of judgments, so even if the District Court concluded after hearing all of the proofs that some form of injunctive action was required, they could take that action. And so, therefore, the Court, while it's not going to rule on the Motion for Summary Disposition, is going to transfer this case to the District Court where it believes jurisdiction is more appropriate.

Whitegate moved for reconsideration, which the circuit court denied. The court reiterated that monetary damages would be below the $25,000 jurisdictional threshold. In addition, the court stated that even if Whitegate's argument that the circuit court had exclusive jurisdiction was correct, Whitegate failed to plead any of the elements required for injunctive relief under MCR 3.310. This appeal followed.

II. ANALYSIS

Jurisdictional issues are questions of law that this Court reviews de novo. *Elba Twp v Gratiot Co Drain Comm'r*, 493 Mich 265, 278; 831 NW2d 204 (2013). "We also review de novo questions of statutory interpretation." *Mich Farm Bureau v Dep't of Environment, Great Lakes, & Energy*, 515 Mich 481, 512; 28 NW3d 629 (2024). De novo review "means that we review the legal issues presented without extending any deference to the trial court." *Washington v Washington*, 283 Mich App 667, 671; 770 NW2d 908 (2009).

"Subject-matter jurisdiction is a legal term of art that refers to the authority of the court to exercise judicial power over a class or category of cases." *Mich Farm Bureau*, 515 Mich at 512. "The existence of subject matter jurisdiction turns not on the particular facts of the matter before the court, but on its general legal classification." *Winkler by Winkler v Marist Fathers of Detroit, Inc*, 500 Mich 327, 341; 901 NW2d 566 (2017). "The Michigan Constitution and the Legislature define the class of cases over which courts have subject-matter jurisdiction." *Teddy 23, LLC v Mich Film Office*, 313 Mich App 557, 564; 884 NW2d 799 (2015).

Const 1963, art 6, § 13 states that circuit courts "shall have original jurisdiction in all matters not prohibited by law[.]" Our Supreme Court has recognized that Michigan's circuit courts "are courts of general jurisdiction, with 'original jurisdiction to hear and determine all civil claims and remedies, except where exclusive jurisdiction is given in the constitution or by statute to some other court or where the circuit courts are denied jurisdiction by the constitution or statutes of this state.' " *Winkler*, 500 Mich at 334, quoting MCL 600.605. District courts, on the other hand, are courts of limited jurisdiction. *Hodge v State Farm Mut Auto Ins Co*, 499 Mich 211, 216; 884

NW2d 238 (2016). Under MCL 600.8301(1), district courts have "exclusive jurisdiction in civil actions when the amount in controversy does not exceed $25,000.00."

The circuit court transferred this case to the district court based on its determination that the amount in controversy was less than $25,000. The circuit court failed to acknowledge the limit on the district court's jurisdiction under MCL 600.8315. That provision provides:

> The district court shall not have jurisdiction in actions for injunctions, divorce or actions which are historically equitable in nature, except as otherwise provided by law. However, the district court has jurisdiction and power to make any order proper to fully effectuate the district court's jurisdiction and judgments.

The first sentence plainly states that district courts lack jurisdiction in actions seeking an injunction. Sanchagrin argues that the second sentence is "mutually consistent and supportive" of the first sentence and demonstrates that district courts have authority to enter injunctions.

The primary goal of statutory interpretation is to effectuate the Legislature's intent. *Sunrise Resort Ass'n, Inc v Cheboygan Co Rd Comm*, 511 Mich 325, 333; 999 NW2d 423 (2023). To do this, we examine the language of the statute as a whole. *Id*. at 333-334. "When the Legislature has unambiguously conveyed its intent in a statute, the statute speaks for itself, and judicial construction is not permitted." *Koontz v Ameritech Servs, Inc*, 466 Mich 304, 312; 645 NW2d 34 (2002). "Courts must give effect to every word, phrase, and clause in a statute, and must avoid an interpretation that would render any part of the statute surplusage or nugatory." *Id*. "[A] specific statutory provision controls over a related but more general statutory provision." *DeFrain v State Farm Mut Auto Ins Co*, 491 Mich 359, 367 n 22; 817 NW2d 504 (2012).

Under these principles of statutory interpretation, we cannot conclude that the second sentence of MCL 600.8315 grants district courts jurisdiction over actions seeking injunctive relief. To do so would render nugatory the phrase in the first sentence stating, "The district court shall not have jurisdiction in actions for injunctions . . . ." Moreover, the first sentence is far more specific than the second sentence, which authorizes district courts "to make any order proper to fully effectuate [their] jurisdiction and judgments."

The first sentence of MCL 600.8315 also includes the phrase, "except as otherwise provided by law." MCL 600.8302 sets forth instances in which district courts have concurrent jurisdiction with circuit courts to decide equitable claims. That provision states:

> (1) In addition to the civil jurisdiction provided in sections 5704 [summary proceedings] and 8301 [civil infractions and cases in which the amount in controversy does not exceed $25,000], the district court has equitable jurisdiction and authority concurrent with that of the circuit court in the matters and to the extent provided by this section.
>
> (2) In cases brought under chapter 84 [small claims], the district court may issue and enforce an injunctive order or an order rescinding or reforming a contract.
>
> (3) In an action under chapter 57 [summary proceedings], the district court may hear and determine an equitable claim relating to or arising under chapter 31

> [foreclosure], 33 [partition of lands], or 38 [public nuisance] or involving a right, interest, obligation, or title in land. The court may issue and enforce a judgment or order necessary to effectuate the court's equitable jurisdiction as provided in this subsection, including the establishment of escrow accounts and receiverships.
>
> (4) In an action under chapter 87 [municipal civil infractions], the district court may issue and enforce any judgment, writ, or order necessary to enforce the ordinance. . . . [Footnotes omitted.]

In addition, MCL 600.8303 grants district courts "equitable jurisdiction over forfeiture proceedings brought under chapter 47." Whitegate's claim for equitable relief in this case is not among the exceptions "provided by law."

Further, despite Sanchagrin's assertions otherwise, a review of Whitegate's amended complaint shows that it primarily sought injunctive relief. "A court's subject-matter jurisdiction is determined only by reference to the allegations listed in the complaint." *In re Eddins*, 342 Mich App 529, 539; 995 NW2d 604 (2022) (quotation marks and citation omitted). Whitegate alleged that it requested Sanchagrin, on behalf of the trust, to replace the newly installed windows and trim to conform to the rest of the condominium project, but she refused. Whitegate also alleged that it was irreparably harmed by Sanchagrin's breach of the condominium bylaws and the Condominium Act, MCL 559.101 *et seq*., because "the unsightliness of the unapproved modifications . . . destroy the uniformity of the condominium project." It further asserted, "No amount of money will compensate for the harm, and the Association has no adequate remedy at law." Whitegate cited the forms of relief available under the bylaws and Condominium Act and emphasized "injunctive relief" in bold print. In addition, Whitegate requested as relief that the circuit court grant a permanent injunction requiring Sanchagrin to restore the unit to its previous condition or, alternatively, enter an order allowing Whitegate to do so at Sanchagrin's expense.

Thus, Whitegate's amended complaint demonstrates that it primarily sought injunctive relief. "If it is apparent from the allegations that the matter alleged is within *the class of cases* with regard to which the court has the power to act, then subject-matter jurisdiction exists." *Id*. (quotation marks and citation omitted). Here, it is apparent from Whitegate's allegations that this case is within the class of cases regarding which the circuit court has the power to act. Cf. *Meisner Law Group PC v Weston Downs Condo Ass'n*, 321 Mich App 702, 729-730; 909 NW2d 890 (2017) (holding that because the plaintiff's complaint sounded "primarily in contract" and "plaintiff sought only legal relief—money damages" the district court had exclusive jurisdiction of the action). Because the circuit court has subject-matter jurisdiction over this dispute and erred by concluding otherwise, we reverse the circuit court's order transferring this case to the district court and remand for further proceedings.

Reversed and remanded for further proceedings consistent with this opinion. We do not retain jurisdiction.

/s/ Kristina Robinson Garrett
/s/ Anica Letica
/s/ Christopher M. Trebilcock