

SECOND DIVISION

[A.M. No. MTJ-12-1812 [Formerly A.M. OCA IPI No. 10-2250-MTJ], June 20, 2012]

PILAR S. TAÑOCO, COMPLAINANT, VS. JUDGE INOCENCIO B. SAGUN, JR., PRESIDING JUDGE, MUNICIPAL TRIAL COURT IN CITIES, BRANCH 3, CABANATUAN CITY RESPONDENT.

DECISION

SERENO, J.:

On 4 March 2010, complainant filed a verified Complaint against respondent judge for undue delay in rendering judgment. Complainant alleged that on 6 May 2009, a case for ejectment was filed before the Municipal Trial Court in Cities (MTCC) and raffled to respondent's sala. On 13 October 2009, pretrial was concluded, and the parties were directed to file their position papers. On 23 November 2009, the plaintiff in the ejectment case filed her position paper. As of the date of the filing of the Complaint, no position paper had been filed by the defendant therein. Neither had any decision been rendered by respondent on the case, in violation of the Rule on Summary Procedure, which mandates that ejectment cases should be decided within thirty (30) days from the submission of the position papers of the parties or upon the lapse of the period to do so.

For his part, respondent submitted his Comment stating, among others, that (1) the pretrial Order directing the parties to file their position papers was only issued on 26 January 2010; (2) delay did not cause any prejudice to the plaintiff in the ejectment case, as the defendant had already vacated the subject property; (3) there was no intention to delay on the part of respondent judge; and (4) a Decision had already been rendered on 7 April 2010.

By way of reply, complainant averred that the alleged pretrial Order dated 26 January 2010 was mailed only on 15 March 2010 and thus appeared to have been antedated.

On 14 July 2011, the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) issued a recommendation that respondent be found guilty of Undue Delay in Rendering Judgment/Decision, and that he be fined ₱10,000 and warned that a repetition of the same or a similar offense would be dealt with more severely.

We find the OCA recommendation to be appropriate, with a modification.

Delay in case disposition is a major culprit in the erosion of public faith and confidence in the judiciary and the lowering of its standards. Failure to decide cases within the reglementary period, without strong and justifiable reasons, constitutes gross inefficiency warranting the imposition of administrative sanction on the defaulting judge.^[1]