Syllabus

NOTE: Where it is feasible, a syllabus (headnote) will be released, as is being done in connection with this case, at the time the opinion is issued. The syllabus constitutes no part of the opinion of the Court but has been prepared by the Reporter of Decisions for the convenience of the reader. See *United States* v. *Detroit Timber & Lumber Co.*, 200 U. S. 321, 337.

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF RIDGEWAY

Syllabus

STUDSPERSECOND *v.* EDGAR

CERTIORARI TO THE SUPERIOR COURT OF RIDGEWAY

No. 22–08. Decided September 5, 2022*

On July 3rd, StudsPerSecond filed suit against Fooxaddict in the Superior Court for trover relating to the defendant's alleged unlawful possession of a company clipboard. StudsPerSecond requested judgment consisting partially of monetary relief totalling $4,000. The defendant did not appear when summoned, and a motion for default judgment was accepted. However, the Superior Court awarded total monetary damages of $10 USD. The trial judge determined the appropriateness of this figure through a novel methodology created by the judge. In a separate case filed on July 10th, 2022, StudsPerSecond initiated civil proceedings against BPD_Edgar in the Superior Court, alleging in part that he had taken clipboards dispensed from in-game spawners owned by StudsPerSecond and gave them away to other people, in violation of the company policy of StudsPerSecond. The defendant moved to dismiss for lack of standing, and asserted that the items had no "market value". StudsPerSecond moved to amend their complaint. The Superior Court refused to admit the amended complaint due to its submission six days after the start of proceedings, and subsequently dismissed the case.

Held: In *Fooxaddict,* the Superior Court abused its discretion when it awarded judgment "different in kind from that prayed for in the demand for judgment," as required by Rid. R. Civ. P. Rule 36. In *BPD_Edgar*, the Superior Court incorrectly determined that objects which can be dispensed from in-game spawners infinitely are of no value. It largely relied on this conclusion in granting the motion to dismiss, and incorrectly determined that the case was mooted by the fact that

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* Together with No. 22-09, *StudsPerSecond* v. *Addict,* on certiorari to the Superior Court of Ridgeway.

Syllabus

BPD_Edgar was no longer employed by StudsPerSecond. Furthermore, in *BPD_Edgar*, the Superior Court did not abuse its discretion in refusing to allow the amended complaint filing when the complainant moved to admit an amended complaint six days after the commencement of proceedings.

RSC-CV-510, vacated and remanded; RSC-CV-523, affirmed in part, vacated in part, and remanded.

HAND, J., delivered the opinion for a unanimous Court. POWELL, J., filed a concurring opinion.

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF RIDGEWAY

Nos. 22-08 and 22-09

22-08 STUDSPERSECOND, PETITIONER *v.* BPD_EDGAR

ON WRIT OF CERTIORARI FROM THE SUPERIOR COURT OF RIDGEWAY

22-09 STUDSPERSECOND, PETITIONER *v.* FOOXADDICT

ON WRIT OF CERTIORARI FROM THE SUPERIOR COURT OF RIDGEWAY

[September 5, 2022]

JUSTICE HAND delivered the opinion of the Court.

Petitioner StudsPerSecond is a shipping and delivery company in the State of Ridgeway. In order to meet its business objectives, StudsPerSecond provides its employees with clipboards. Employees can obtain these clipboards from the company's offices through a "dispenser" — a device which is able to infinitely produce clipboards upon demand. There are many other items in the State of Ridgeway which are acquired by the same means; for example, police obtain equipment such as firearms through a similar dispenser. BPD_Edgar was an employee of StudsPerSecond who was entitled to dispense clipboards as part of his position at the

company, but was alleged to have distributed these clipboards to other individuals contrary to corporate policy, in a lawsuit filed by StudsPerSecond. At the time of the proceedings, BPD_Edgar was not employed with StudsPerSecond. The defendant moved to dismiss, asserting that the clipboards had "no value." Further, the defendant asserted that the matter was moot because BPD_Edgar was no longer employed with StudsPerSecond. In response, StudsPerSecond attempted to amend their complaint, to no avail — the Superior Court refused the amended complaint and dismissed the case, agreeing with the defendant. In another case, filed days later, StudsPerSecond brought Fooxaddict to court on the basis that he possessed a company clipboard while not on the job as an employee of StudsPerSecond, also contrary to corporate policy. The Superior Court assigned a concrete monetary value to the clipboard and awarded it to StudsPerSecond. To the question of whether clipboards had real value in the eyes of the law, these cases yielded outcomes that were quite different indeed.

I

Before we examine the conflict with respect to the valuation of the clipboard, we will first address the question regarding the amended complaint in *BPD_Edgar*. The petitioner in *BPD_Edgar* asserts that the Superior Court's refusal to admit their amended complaint amounts to an abuse of discretion. According to the petitioner, Rid. R. Civ. P. 4(f) entitles them to an amended complaint "unless it clearly appears that material prejudice would result in the substantial rights" of the opposing party. We consider this to be an incorrect interpretation of Rule 4(f).[1] Apart from

[1] Rid R. Civ. P. 4(f) reads, in full: "At any time in its discretion and upon such terms as it deems just, the court may allow any process or proof of service thereof to be amended unless it clearly appears that material prejudice would result in the substantial rights of the party against whom the process is issued."

proofs of service, which a civil complaint is certainly not, the scope of this clause is limited to processes. A process "is generally defined to be the means of compelling the defendant in an action to appear in court (...) or a means whereby a court compels a compliance with its demands." Black's Law Dictionary 1370 (4th ed. 1968). Processes refer to writs generally. The civil complaint is not the means by which a defendant is compelled to appear before the court; indeed, this is the role of the summons.

The Rules of Civil Procedure provide no standard for when civil complaints may be amended. It does implicitly permit judges to allow amending of complaints in Rid. R. Civ. P. 13: "In any action, the court may in its discretion direct the attorneys for the parties to appear before it for a conference to consider (...) [t]he necessity or desirability of amendments to the pleadings". Broad discretion is given to trial judges to determine when amendments to pleadings, such as civil complaints, may be admissible. The Superior Court considered the timing of the amended complaint inappropriate when the petitioner submitted it six days after proceedings began, and refused to admit it. This does not run afoul of the rules, and we intend to give broad deference to trial judges in deciding matters of whether amendments to pleadings ought to be admitted. As a result, we affirm the Superior Court's rejection of the amended complaint in *BPD_Edgar*.

II

Dispenser-based items are common. However, there's a snag as far as determining damages is concerned when things go awry: there's no obvious indication of the monetary value of items that are dispensed. In *BPD_Edgar*, the Superior Court dismissed the suit largely on the basis that the clipboards had "unsubstantiable value" because they originate from a dispenser, and so the court was unable to redress the alleged injury. But in *Fooxaddict*, the Superior

Court devised a unique method for determining the value of the clipboard. Through novel calculations involving comparisons and taking ratios of market values between in-game items and real-world equivalents, the trial judge determined that the monetary value of a clipboard was $2 USD, and awarded a further $8 in damages. So, is the value of a clipboard "unsubstantiable," as the decision in *BPD_Edgar,* RSC-CV-523 (Jul. 22, 2022), at *1, puts it? Or was the approach in *Fooxaddict* correct? We review the conclusions with respect to valuation of clipboards in these cases de novo, as the question of whether a dispensed item has any value is a question of law. See, *e.g.*, *Highmark Inc.* v. *Allcare Health Management System Inc.*, 572 U. S. 559, 563 (2014).

III

We agree that the task of determining the value of an item obtained from a dispenser is not trivial, but to close the issue by describing its value as "unsubstantiable" represents a wholly unreasonable shirking of judgment. A clipboard is a tangible object. It serves as a legitimate business tool for StudsPerSecond. It makes no difference for the purpose of valuation that the clipboard can be dispensed without end. If a clipboard is unlawfully taken from StudsPerSecond, they have still lost a clipboard, even if they can produce another. The *existing* pool of clipboards under the control of StudsPerSecond has been reduced, even if StudsPerSecond has access to an infinite *theoretical* pool of clipboards which do not exist. The task of how to determine the value of dispensed items such as clipboards is left to the trial judge. As a result, the Superior Court erred in its dismissal of *BPD_Edgar*, which significantly relied on the trial judge's belief that no relief could be provided because in essence, it could not figure out how to provide the relief. Accordingly, the judgment in *BPD_Edgar* is vacated and remanded.

So, how about the valuation framework imposed in *Fooxaddict*?[2] We decline to impose a universal framework on how trial judges should assess the value of dispensed items. There is simply no satisfactory "one-size-fits-all" solution to this issue. At its core, the duty of assigning a monetary value to an item is an exercise in evidentiary analysis; as such, this issue is properly left to the trial courts, to whom significant discretion is afforded for these assessments. While the methodology used in *Fooxaddict* was perhaps unusual, it does not represent a departure from acceptable limits of judicial discretion, so we need not perform any further analysis.

IV

The judgment in *Fooxaddict* is not saved, however. The Superior Court should not have done any sort of novel value analysis, because the judgment was in default. Rid. R. Civ. P. 36 provides, in part, that "[a] judgment by default shall not be different in kind from that prayed for in the demand for judgment." The complaint from StudsPerSecond requested monetary damages totalling $4,000, yet the trial judge's analysis left StudsPerSecond with only $10. There was no explanation as to why the Superior Court departed

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[2] The Superior Court wrote in its judgment in *Fooxaddict*: "This court has awarded this sum based off of the following calculations; [t]he cost of a Percivel in Palmer is 185 dollars. The average cost of a used Crown Victoria (the vehicle that the Percivel is modeled after) goes for, on average, $4,000 USD. The cost of a high-end clipboard is $15 USD. We adjust this price according to the cost difference between the Percivel and Crown Victoria (~0.04% of the cost) to determine the true value of the clipboard adjusted for ROBLOX. Therefore the market value of the clipboard, in Ridgeway money, is 0.6 dollars. In the interest of clarity, this court will round the market value up to account for the variability of the aspects used in this determination to 2 dollars, though it should be noted that the $4,000 estimate for a good-condition Crown Victoria is extremely generous and thus the true value of the clipboard would likely be less." See RSC-CV-510 (Jul. 12, 2022).

from the rule, and we discern no special circumstance warranting the same. Having decided that all damages prayed for should have been awarded, we reserve judgment on whether the $8 in punitive damages awarded by the trial judge would have otherwise been appropriate. The judgment of the Superior Court in *Fooxaddict* is vacated, and is remanded for the awarding of damages consistent with this opinion.

V

We now confront the issue of standing in BPD_Edgar. We previously decided that "the jurisdictional doctrines under [the United States Constitution] Article III's Cases and Controversies Clause (...) appl[y] to cases in the State of Ridgeway." *State* v. *Lx1nas*, 1 Rid. 41, 48-49 (2022). In BPD_Edgar, the Superior Court found the case to be mooted by the fact that the defendant was no longer employed by StudsPerSecond at the time of the proceedings. "A case becomes moot—and therefore no longer a "Case" or "Controversy" for purposes of Article III—when the issues presented are no longer 'live' or the parties lack a legally cognizable interest in the outcome." *Already, LLC* v. *Nike Inc*., 568 U. S. 91 (2013) (quoting *Murphy* v. Hunt, 455 U. S. 478, 481 (1982)). Before we decide on the mootness question, however, we must be satisfied that StudsPerSecond had standing to pursue their claim in the first place.

The seminal test for standing is defined in three elements: "[f]irst, the plaintiff must have suffered an "injury in fact" - an invasion of a legally protected interest which is concrete and particularized, (...) and actual or imminent, not 'conjectural' or 'hypothetical'(...). Second, there must be a causal connection between the injury and the conduct complained of - the injury has to be fairly traceable to the challenged action of the defendant, and not the result of the independent action of some third party not before the court.

(...) Third, it must be 'likely,' as opposed to merely 'speculative,' that the injury will be redressed by a favorable decision." *Lujan* v. *Defenders of Wildlife*, 504 U. S. 560, 561 (1992) (some internal quotations omitted). The relevant question is whether StudsPerSecond's claims in the unamended civil complaint, if accepted as true, establish standing. We find that they do. StudsPerSecond suffered concrete injury when BPD_Edgar gave away the company's clipboards to other individuals. The first and second prongs of the *Lujan* test are therefore satisfied. As previously discussed, the clipboards have real monetary value. StudsPerSecond lost control and possession of the clipboards when they were distributed by the respondent. Consequently, it is foreseeable that a favorable decision would redress the injury suffered by StudsPerSecond by, for example, allowing them to acquire new clipboards.

Having found that the petitioner had standing to pursue their original claim in *BPD_Edgar*, we further find that the claim is not mooted by the respondent's termination. The respondent contends that because he is no longer able to dispense clipboards, the matter is no longer justiciable. This argument cannot be accepted because the injury to StudsPerSecond persists, regardless of whether the respondent is employed with them. The clipboards that the respondent is alleged to have distributed to others remain out of the control of the petitioner. Therefore, StudsPerSeconds retains their "legally cognizable interest in the outcome." *Already, LLC, supra*. As an illustrative example, if the respondent had returned all clipboards to StudsPerSecond, then the case may well have been mooted.

* * *

The judgment of the Superior Court in No. 22-08 is vacated, and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this opinion. The judgment of the Superior Court in No. 22-09 is vacated, and the case is remanded

with instructions to award damages consistent with this opinion.

It is so ordered.

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF RIDGEWAY

Nos. 22-08 and 22-09

22-08 STUDSPERSECOND, PETITIONER *v.* BPD_EDGAR

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22-09 STUDSPERSECOND, PETITIONER *v.* FOOXADDICT

ON WRIT OF CERTIORARI FROM THE SUPERIOR COURT OF RIDGEWAY

[September 5, 2022]

JUSTICE POWELL, concurring.

I join the opinion of the Court. In my opinion, however, it would have been more plausible to address the issues of whether StudsPerSecond had standing to pursue the case, or whether these cases were moot at all, before addressing the issues regarding damages. After all, "[n]o principle is more fundamental to the judiciary's proper role in our system of government than the constitutional limitation of federal-court jurisdiction to actual cases or controversies." *DaimlerChrysler Corp.* v. *Cuno,* 547 U. S. 332, 341 (2006). "If a dispute is not a proper case or controversy, the courts have no business deciding it, or expounding the law in the course of doing so." *Id.* Under the Cases and Controversies Clause, Rid. Const. Art. V, §IV, therefore, our jurisdiction only extends to "actual, ongoing controversies." *Honig* v. *Doe*, 484 U. S. 305, 317 (1988); see also *Lewis* v. *Continental Bank Corp.,* 494 U. S. 472, 477 (1990). With these points in

mind, the cases and controversies requirement should serve as a jurisdictional bar, one that we should resolve prior to addressing the merits in any case.

In addition, I find no reason to compare prices of an in-game item with real life. By attempting to calculate the value of Ridgeway dollars in terms of United States dollars, the Superior Court runs the risk of causing chaos and confusion, particularly in an area where our jurisprudence has not been fully developed. Nevertheless, because the damages calculations are within the Superior Court's discretion, I join the majority's analysis.