

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Former Pleasantville School Board Member Admits Attempted Extortion

(More)

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CAMDEN – Former Pleasantville Board of Education member Maurice “Pete” Callaway pleaded guilty today to attempted extortion, admitting that he accepted bribes, through intermediaries, from a cooperating roofing business and an undercover insurance brokerage company in return for his official assistance in steering public contracts to the companies, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Callaway, 53, pleaded guilty to a one-count criminal Information charging attempted extortion under color of official right before U.S. District Judge Jerome B. Simandle. Under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, Callaway faces a probable range of between 37 and 46 months in federal prison. Callaway is free on \$200,000 bond pending his sentencing, which is scheduled for Feb. 15.

Callaway’s arrest on Sept. 6, 2007, along with nine other public officials and one private citizen, resulted from a public corruption investigation that progressed from southern to northern New Jersey.

“As this case moves forward, it is plainly clear that the Pleasantville Board of Education was about as corrupt a government body as I’ve ever seen,” said Christie.

At his plea hearing, Callaway admitted that between May 2006 and September 2006 he accepted corrupt cash payments of \$10,000, \$1,500 and \$1,500 for his support of Pleasantville Board of Education (PBOE) contracts with an insurance brokerage business and a roofing business.

Callaway admitted that on May 24, 2006, in Egg Harbor Township, he directed an individual to accept a \$10,000 corrupt payment from a cooperating witness in exchange for his official assistance in obtaining roofing work from the PBOE. Callaway admitted that he was present when the cooperating witness gave the individual the \$10,000 payment and that he ultimately received the payment. Callaway also admitted that he had previously solicited the corrupt payment with the assistance of fellow school board member Jayson G. Adams, 27.

Callaway admitted that on June 5, 2006, he directed Louis Mister, 57, of Pleasantville, to accept two separate corrupt cash payments of \$1,500 from a cooperating witness on Callaway’s behalf. Callaway admitted that the money was paid to him, through Mister, in exchange for his official assistance in attempting to secure roofing work from the Pleasantville Board of Education for a roofing business.

Mister was also arrested and charged with Callaway and the other public officials on Sept. 6.

Furthermore, Callaway admitted that on Sept. 12, 2006, as part of a corrupt agreement, he and others voted to pass a resolution authorizing the undercover insurance brokerage business to provide brokerage services to the PBOE. Callaway admitted that his vote in favor of the resolution was made in exchange for corrupt payments to be received through Adams from a cooperating witness.

As part of his guilty pleas, Callaway agreed to forfeit \$13,000, which he had received in corrupt payments.

The charge to which Callaway pleaded guilty carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. However, in determining an actual sentence, Judge Simandle will consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors, including acceptance of responsibility. The judge, however, has wide discretion and is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, for the investigation. He also credited for their assistance in the investigation prosecutors and investigators with the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Theodore F.L. Housel.

The cases against Callaway and the other defendants are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys David Bocian and Christopher J. Gramiccioni.

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Defense Counsel: Francis J. Hartman, Esq. Moorestown