

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07102



Ralph J. Marra, Jr., Acting U.S. Attorney

More Information? Call the Assistant U.S. Attorney or other contact listed below to see if more information is available.

News on the Internet: News Releases and related documents are posted at our website.
Go to: <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/press/index.html>

Contact: bell0806.rel
Michael Drewniak, Public Information Officer FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
973-645-2888 Aug. 6, 2009

Jersey City Sewer Permit Supervisor Pleads Guilty To Attempted Extortion

(More)

Public Affairs Office
Michael Drewniak, PAO

973-645-2888

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/press/index.html>

NEWARK – The supervisor of permits and connection fees for the Jersey City Municipal Utilities Authority pleaded guilty today to extorting corrupt cash payments from contractors, Acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra, Jr. announced.

Angela Bellizzi, 53, of South River, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Susan D. Wigenton to a one-count criminal Information charging attempted extortion.

Bellizzi is free on \$75,000 bond pending her sentencing, which is scheduled for Nov. 12.

At her plea hearing, Bellizzi admitted accepting cash payments in exchange for her agreement to falsify and/or approve fraudulent sewer permit applications submitted by a government cooperating witness. The fraudulent permit applications for various properties made it appear that sewer connections would be for two-bedroom residences, as opposed to three-bedroom residences, which resulted in lower permit application fees.

Bellizzi admitted that she extorted corrupt payments in two ways: She agreed to falsify permit applications in return for payments, or instructed the contractor on how to falsify permit applications that would be approved by her in return for payments.

Bellizzi admitted that she told a cooperating witness who owned and/or renovated residential properties that, by fraudulently indicating on sewer connection application that it was for a two-bedroom versus three-bedroom residence, the cooperating witness was saving between \$1,300 and \$1,500.

Bellizzi admitted that on several occasions she took corrupt cash payments of between \$200 and \$500 from the cooperating witness for fraudulent applications. She also admitted that she told the cooperating witness that she normally charged other contractors \$300 for similar fraudulently prepared applications.

According to a stipulation in Bellizzi's plea agreement, the value of the benefit received by the cooperating witness and others who acted similarly with Bellizzi exceeded \$70,000 but was less than \$120,000. She agreed that the corrupt contact occurred between at least January 2005 and June 2008.

The investigation is continuing.

“This is just more of the same of what we've seen too often in Jersey City and elsewhere in New Jersey – public officials and employees in a position of authority abusing that authority to line their pockets,” Marra said. “It's a disgrace and subverts even routine functions of government.”

“Today's guilty plea was not connected to or influenced by the recent corruption takedown of July 23rd,” noted Weysan Dun, FBI Special Agent in Charge in Newark. “This was a separate investigation conducted and prosecuted on its own merits. However, we take this opportunity to drive home the message that bribery and corruption should not be tolerated and we call on the citizens of New Jersey to take a stand as they have done recently. We thank the Special Investigative Unit of the Jersey City Police Department for their assistance in this investigation.”

The charge to which Bellizzi pleaded guilty carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. However, in determining an actual sentence, Judge Wigenton 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.

Under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, Bellizzi faces a probable sentencing range of between 37 and 46 months in federal prison. The judge, however, has discretion and is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence, which could fall within or outside of that range.

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

Marra credited the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, with the investigation leading to today's guilty plea. Marra also credited the Jersey City Police Department Special Investigation Unit.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jenny Kramer of the Office's Special Prosecutions Division.

-end-

Defense Counsel: Anthony Iacullo, Esq., Nutley.