

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Former Cherry Hill Director of Code Enforcement and Inspections
Admits Taking Bribes from Municipal Contractor

(More)

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CAMDEN – The former director of the Cherry Hill Department of Code Enforcement and Inspections pleaded guilty and admitted today that he accepted approximately \$4,500 in corrupt payments from representatives of a private inspection services company in exchange for his assistance in obtaining municipal contracts, Acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra announced.

Anthony Saccomanno, 66, of Cherry Hill, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Renée Marie Bumb to a one-count Information charging him with mail fraud for devising a scheme to defraud the Township of Cherry Hill and its citizens of the right to his honest services. Judge Bumb continued the defendant's release on a \$50,000 bond pending sentencing, which is scheduled for Oct. 5.

At his plea hearing, Saccomanno admitted that he solicited and accepted cash payments from officials representing Building Inspection Underwriters, Inc. ("BIU"), a private third-party inspection service headquartered in Pennsylvania with offices in New Jersey.

Saccomanno admitted that in 2007 and 2008, while he served as director of the Department of Code Enforcement and Inspections for Cherry Hill, BIU held a contract with the municipality to provide electrical, plumbing and elevator inspection services. Furthermore, Saccomanno stated that as director, he held a high-level decision-making role in Cherry Hill's process for selecting third-party inspectors like BIU.

Specifically, Saccomanno admitted that he accepted a secret cash payment of approximately \$2,500 on Sept. 20, 2007, from a representative of BIU while at an Italian restaurant in Cherry Hill. Saccomanno accepted the corrupt payment in exchange for his recommendation of a 2008 extension of BIU's inspection contract with Cherry Hill. Saccomanno also admitted taking a corrupt cash payment of \$2,000 in July 2008 from Russell B. McLaughlin, Jr., 56, of Chalfont, Pa., until recently the president of BIU, to influence the 2009 contract renewal.

Furthermore, Saccomanno admitted that on Nov. 27, 2007, he caused a contract extension letter to be sent through the U.S. mail from Cherry Hill Township to BIU stating that Cherry Hill wished to exercise its renewal of the electrical, plumbing and elevator inspection services contract with BIU. That letter was subsequently signed by a representative of BIU and returned, causing the contract to be extended.

McLaughlin pleaded guilty before Judge Bumb on April 22, 2009, to a one-count Information that charged him with bribery. Judge Bumb continued McLaughlin's release on a \$50,000 bond pending sentencing, which is scheduled for Aug. 10.

At his plea hearing, McLaughlin admitted that as president of BIU, he personally gave a \$5,000 cash corrupt payment to Saccomanno on Dec. 9, 2008, in return for his official action in aid of BIU's attempt to obtain an Inspection Services Contract with Cherry Hill.

The charge to which Saccomanno pleaded guilty carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Bumb 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. The judge, however, 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.

Marra credited Special Agents of the FBI Philadelphia Division, South Jersey Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Janice K. Fedarcyk in Philadelphia, and the IRS Criminal Investigation, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Julio La Rosa, with the investigation leading to the guilty plea.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Joshua Drew of the Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorneys: Jeffrey Zucker, Esq. Camden
Nicholas Harbist, Esq. Cherry Hill