

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Passaic Inspector Admits Taking Bribe, Negotiating Future Payoffs

(More)

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NEWARK – A former City of Passaic building inspector pleaded guilty today to a one-count Information charging him with accepting and agreeing to accept bribes for his official assistance, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Mark Hooks, 49, of Passaic, was a building inspector for the City of Passaic in January 2006 when he demanded and accepted a \$500 corrupt payment from a local property manager who was in fact cooperating with the FBI and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General (HUD OIG).

Hooks admitted that while negotiating future corrupt payments with the cooperating witness, he stated in substance that he had helped dispose of city paperwork that was complicating the cooperating witness' efforts to acquire a City of Passaic property. Hooks further admitted that in exchange for further corrupt payments, he could help the cooperating witness "get rid of" certain tenants who resided in a City of Passaic property that CW was looking to acquire.

The charge to which Hooks pleaded guilty, attempting to obstruct, delay and affect interstate commerce by extortion, carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. U.S. District Judge Jose L. Linares scheduled sentencing for Feb. 13.

Hooks was initially arrested and charged on a criminal complaint in March 2007. He remains free on \$25,000 bond until sentencing.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI's Garret Mountain Resident Agency in West Paterson, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, and Special Agents from HUD OIG, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Rene Febles, with the investigation that resulted in today's guilty plea. Christie also credited Assistant U.S. Attorney Adam S. Lurie of the Office's Special Prosecutions Division, who is prosecuting the case.

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Defense Counsel:
Griffin: Timothy M. Donohue, West Orange