

NEWS

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roac0524.rel
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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New Brunswick Supervisory Clerk Arrested
on Charges of Extorting Corrupt Payments

(More)

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NEWARK – A former Supervisory Clerk for the City of New Brunswick was arrested today, charged with extorting cash bribes in exchange for official favors, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Linda Roach, 55, was arrested this morning at her North Brunswick home on a criminal Complaint by Special Agents of the FBI and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General. Roach was expected to make an initial appearance today at 2:30 p.m. before U.S. Magistrate Judge Esther Salas.

According to the criminal Complaint, Roach accepted from contractors corrupt cash payments in exchange for exercising and agreeing to exercise her official influence in favor of the contractors' companies. Between January 2004 and September 2006, Roach was the Supervisory Clerk Typist for the City of New Brunswick's Department of Community, Planning, and Economic Development ("the Department"). As alleged in the Complaint, Roach performed the role of an office manager and was responsible for, among other things, processing purchase orders that were necessary for securing payments to contractors for rehabilitation work that they performed.

The Complaint alleges that between January 2004 and September 2006, Roach accepted regular cash payments from contractors. In exchange, Roach exercised and agreed to exercise her influence as Supervisory Clerk in accelerating the payment of rehabilitation contract monies to the contractors. According to the Complaint, Roach accepted approximately \$2,810 in corrupt cash payments from a Perth Amboy-based contractor and monthly cash payments of approximately \$100-\$150 from a New Brunswick-based contractor.

The charge of extortion under color of official right against Roach carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

The federal investigation began after the matter, in its early stages, was referred by the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office to the U.S. Attorney's office and federal investigative agencies. The investigation is ongoing and more prosecutions are expected.

The charges contained in a criminal Complaint are merely accusations. Every defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Others who have been charged and pleaded guilty so far are:

- Prakash George Karot, 37, of Perth Amboy, manager of a Perth Amboy-based construction and maintenance firm that received more than \$900,000 in rehabilitation contracts. He admitted participating in a scheme to give cash and other benefits to multiple employees of the Department of Community Planning and Economic

Development in exchange for official favors for his company. For a news release on that May 11 guilty plea, follow links at the Public Affairs Office website:
www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/press/2007releases.html

- Richard Kaplan, 57, of New Brunswick, a former Rehabilitation Construction Inspector and Assistant Zoning Officer for the City of New Brunswick. He admitted to receiving regular corrupt cash payments and discounted work from contractors on a home he owned in exchange for expedited and lenient inspections. For a news release on that guilty plea, on April 20, go to the Public Affairs Office website.
- George Thomas, 38, of New York City, co-owner of a Perth Amboy-based construction and maintenance firm that received more than \$900,000 in rehabilitation contracts. He admitted participating in a scheme to give cash and other benefits to multiple employees of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development in exchange for official favors for his company. That guilty plea was on March 27.
- Joseph McNulty, 42, of North Brunswick, and Sam K. John, 48, of Sayreville, co-owners of a New Brunswick based construction and maintenance firm that received more than \$1.3 million in rehabilitation contracts. They admitted participating in a scheme to give cash and other benefits to multiple employees of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development in exchange for official favors for their company. Those guilty pleas occurred on March 15.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI's Franklin Township Resident Agency, under the direction of Acting Special Agent Pedro Ruiz; and Special Agents of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Renee Febles, for their investigation leading to today's charges. The investigation also was assisted by investigators from the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Bruce J. Kaplan, and the New Brunswick Police Department, under the direction of Police Chief Joseph Catanese.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian R. Howe of the U.S. Attorney's Special Prosecution's Unit in Newark.

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