

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Former Housing Rehabilitation Director in New Brunswick Arrested and Charged with Taking \$112,000 in Bribes

– Former City Clerk Pleads Guilty in Same Corruption Probe –

(More)

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NEWARK – A former Director of housing rehabilitation for the City of New Brunswick was arrested today, charged in a 54-count Indictment with extorting and accepting approximately \$112,500 in corrupt cash payments, as well as cut-rate home improvements, in exchange for official favors, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

William Walker, 34, was arrested this morning at his Pennsauken home on the extortion, bribery and conspiracy charges by Special Agents of the FBI and Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General. Walker was expected to make an initial appearance today at 2:30 p.m. before U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark Falk.

Also today, former New Brunswick Supervisory Clerk, Linda Carol Roach, 55, of North Brunswick, pleaded guilty as part of the same corruption investigation for accepting more than \$3,000 in corrupt payments from contractors in exchange for official favors. Walker and Roach both worked in the city's Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (the "Department").

"By now, it is painfully obvious that corruption was rampant and bribe-taking routine in New Brunswick's Planning and Economic Development Department," said Christie. "To date there have been five guilty pleas, and I can assure the people of New Brunswick that we are not finished with our investigation and prosecutions."

"The indictment and arrest of William Walker is another bitter pill for New Jersey's residents to swallow," said FBI Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun. "Corruption is rampant at high levels and at low levels and all levels in between. I again call on the citizens of New Jersey to call the FBI whenever they may be able to point out corruption in their community."

According to Walker's Indictment, Walker accepted from contractors corrupt cash payments and other benefits in exchange for exercising and agreeing to exercise his official influence in favor of the contractors' companies. From about 2002 to about November 2006, Walker was the Director of the Neighborhood Preservation Project for the Department. According to the Indictment, Walker's responsibilities included approving funding and contracts for the rehabilitation of substandard conditions in homes owned by qualified low-or-moderate-income owners within the City of New Brunswick.

The Indictment alleges that between January 2004 and September 2006, Walker routinely received corrupt cash payments from Friendly Maintenance, a construction and maintenance business based in Middlesex County. The Indictment further alleges that Walker received discounted work from Friendly Maintenance at his home and rental property.

According to the Indictment, Walker received the illegal payments and benefits in order to influence and reward him for his official acts, including the awarding of rehabilitation contracts to Friendly Maintenance. The Indictment alleges that Walker received a total of approximately \$51,500 in corrupt cash payments from Friendly Maintenance.

According to the Indictment, between 2004 and 2006, Walker also routinely solicited and accepted corrupt cash payments from Taj Maintenance, a construction and maintenance business based in Perth Amboy. The Indictment alleges that Walker accepted approximately \$61,000 in illicit cash payments from Taj Maintenance in exchange for exercising his official influence as Director in awarding rehabilitation contracts to Taj Maintenance.

Walker faces a statutory maximum penalty of 20 years in prison for each charge of extortion under color of official right (Counts 1-19 and 23-50); 10 years in prison for each charge of bribery (Counts 20-22 and 51-53), and five years in prison for the charge of conspiracy to solicit and accept corrupt payments (Count 54). Each count in the Indictment carries a \$250,000 fine.

At Roach's plea hearing, she admitted accepting more than \$3,000 in corrupt cash payments from contractors in exchange for using her influence as a Supervisory Clerk to accelerate payment of rehabilitation contract money to contractors.

Roach pleaded guilty to a one-count information before U.S. District Court Judge Joseph E. Irenas. The Information charged her with accepting corrupt payments. The charge carries a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian R. Howe. Judge Irenas scheduled Roach's sentencing for Dec. 7.

Between January 2004 and September 2006, Roach was the Supervisory Clerk for the Department. In that capacity, 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 the rehabilitation work that they performed.

Roach admitted that during that time, she accepted regular cash payments from Friendly Maintenance and Taj Maintenance to influence and reward her for expediting the payment of Department checks to those companies.

The federal investigation began after the matter was referred by the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office to the U.S. Attorney's office and federal investigative agencies. The investigation is ongoing.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI's Franklin Township Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun in Newark, and Special Agents of the HUD Office of the Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Renee Febles, with the investigation leading to today's guilty plea and Indictment. The investigation also was assisted by investigators from the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Middlesex County Prosecutor Bruce J. Kaplan, and 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 Division in Newark.

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Defense counsel:

Jerome A. Ballarotto, Esq. – Trenton (Walker)

Lorraine S. Gauli-Rufo, Esq. – Newark (Roach)