

News Release

U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
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William J. Edwards, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, and C. Frank Figliuzzi, Special Agent in Charge of the Cleveland Division of the FBI, today announced that two Informations were filed charging James S. McCullough, age 56, of Cleveland, Ohio, and Juan A. Alejandro, age 41, of North Ridgeville, Ohio with one count each of extortion under color of official right. These Informations conclude the Department of Justice investigation of the City of Cleveland Building and Housing Department (“CBHD”).

James S. McCullough

The Information states that McCullough received over \$1500 in cash, using his official position of residential housing inspector with the City of Cleveland Building and Housing Department (“CBHD”). As an agent of CBHD, McCullough was responsible for inspecting residential construction projects within the City of Cleveland to ensure compliance with the City of Cleveland’s building and zoning codes.

The Information further states that McCullough demanded and received bribes from a purchaser of houses from New York to reduce the price of a house using CBHD violation notices and removing those violations after receiving cash payments.

Juan A. Alejandro

The Information states that Alejandro received hundreds of dollars in cash, using his official position of residential housing inspector with the City of Cleveland Building and Housing Department (“CBHD”). As an agent of CBHD, Alejandro was responsible for inspecting residential construction projects within the City of Cleveland to ensure compliance with the City of Cleveland’s building and zoning codes.

The Information further states that Alejandro demanded and received bribes from a purchaser of houses from New York to reduce the price of a house using CBHD violation notices and removing those violations after receiving cash payments.

Today’s Informations follow the charges brought against four former City of Cleveland Building Inspectors and one Superintendent and Project Manager of a privately owned development firm:

- (1) Richard J. Huberty, former CBHD electrical inspector, age 50, of Cleveland, Ohio, pleaded guilty on April 15, 2009, to six counts of extortion under color of official right and four counts of bribery in federally funded programs;
- (2) Lawrence (“Larry”) P. Skule, former Chief Plumbing Inspector , age 63, of Rocky River, Ohio, was charged on May 15, 2009, with one count of extortion under color of official right;
- (3) Richard M. Kocuba, former CBHD electrical inspector, age 64, of Cleveland, Ohio, was charged on May 15, 2009, with one count of extortion under color of official right;
- (4) Bobby G. Cuevas, former CBHD electrical inspector, age 48, of Cleveland, Ohio, was charged on May 15, 2009, with one count of extortion under color of official

right;

- (5) Henry (“Hank”) J. Picozzi, age 43 of Mentor, Superintendent and Project Manager for K& D Group, Inc., a privately owned development firm, pleaded guilty on March 31, 2009, to five counts of bribery in federally funded programs.

U.S. Attorney Edwards stated: “Today’s filings mark the end of the federal investigation into corrupt activities at the City of Cleveland Building and Housing Department. We will work with the City of Cleveland and the Cleveland Police Department by sharing the results of this investigation with them.”

Special Agent Figliuzzi stated: “Mayor Jackson, Director of Public Safety Martin Flask, and Chief of the Cleveland Division of Police Michael McGrath offered their complete cooperation throughout this investigation. In the next several weeks, the FBI will provide the City with additional information developed during our inquiry pertaining to potential violations of state law or internal policies, to be pursued as appropriate.”

If convicted, the defendants’ sentences will be determined by the Court after review of factors unique to this case, including the defendants’ prior criminal records, if any, the defendants’ roles in the offenses and the characteristics of the violations. In all cases the sentence will not exceed the statutory maximum and in most cases it will be less than the maximum.

These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Justin J. Roberts, following investigation by the Cleveland office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The U.S. Attorney acknowledges the cooperation and assistance of all the representatives of the City of Cleveland during the course of the CBHD investigation.

An Information is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government’s burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.