

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Dec. 14, 2006

Founder of Leading New Jersey Engineering Firm
Indicted on Charges of Paying Bribes to Officials

(More)

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NEWARK – The founding member of a major New Jersey civil engineering company was

indicted today, accused of paying bribes to former Ocean Township mayor Terrence Weldon and another former official to gain favor and influence in securing and maintaining contracts for the engineering firm, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Howard M. Schoor, 67, of Manalapan, is charged in the Indictment with conspiracy to defraud the public of the honest services of officials of Ocean Township (Monmouth County) and the Township of Ocean Sewerage Authority (TOSA). The charge carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Schoor was not scheduled to appear in court today and will be arraigned before a U.S. District Judge once the case is assigned.

The Indictment, returned late today, alleges that Schoor, a founding member of the Schoor DePalma Engineers and Consultants, paid a total of \$16,000 in cash in bribes to Weldon and former TOSA chairman Stephen D. Kessler between about 1998 and 2001 while the engineering firm was seeking to get and maintain large contracts with TOSA.

The engineering firm itself has cooperated in the government's investigation and is not accused of wrongdoing.

By letter to the firm on Aug. 5, 2005, Schoor submitted his resignation, saying that in his 30-year professional representation with the firm of Ocean Township and TOSA, he had never engaged in any wrongdoing himself or on behalf of the engineering firm.

According to the Indictment, however, Schoor made cash payments totaling \$16,000 to Weldon and to former TOSA chairman Stephen D. Kessler. Schoor also allegedly gave Kessler, on several occasions, free use of Schoor's condominium in Boca Raton, Fla. The largest of the cash payments, three for \$5,000 each – were made directly to Kessler to be shared with Weldon, according to the Indictment.

The alleged corrupt payments were specifically as follows:

- In about 2000, Schoor gave Kessler \$5,000;
- In about May 2001, in Freehold, Schoor gave Kessler \$5,000;
- Between about Nov. 12 and Nov. 16, 2001, in Atlantic City, Schoor gave Kessler \$5,000.
- Between about 1998 and 1999, one additional cash payment for \$1,000 was made by Schoor directly to Weldon at a Jackson golf course.

Throughout the relevant period described in the Indictment, Schoor was designated the official engineer for the Township of Ocean and TOSA, and sought business with both entities. Among the business received was the engineering firm's work in connection with between \$4 million to \$7.8 million in capital improvements for TOSA, in which the engineering firm estimated it

would receive approximately \$600,000 to \$850,000 in fees.

According to the Indictment, it was Schoor's intention in making the concealed corrupt payments and other benefits to influence and reward Kessler and Weldon for their continued official support of the engineering firm as specific opportunities arose. Among those opportunities, according to the Indictment, was Kessler's official action in connection with the engineering firm obtaining the TOSA engineering contract for the 2000 to 2001 capital improvement plan.

The Indictment also alleges several acts of concealment by Schoor of the corrupt payments and benefits, including, among others, giving payments in cash to avoid an audit trail. Following a public disclosure that Weldon had received corrupt payments, Schoor wrote a letter to the Township of Ocean and certain of its officials in which he attempted to conceal his own corrupt activity. In the letter, he wrote in part, according to the Indictment:

“... The undersigned and [the engineering firm] appreciates our long-term relationship, and you are assured that former Mayor Weldon, or anyone else in the Township, has never asked us to provide favorable treatment or to give special consideration to any person or any project within the township.”

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Leslie G. Wisner, Jr. in Newark with the investigation of Schoor leading to today's Indictment.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys James Nobile and Brian Howe of the Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.

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Defense Attorney: Justin Walder, Esq., Roseland