

NEWS

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Former Brick Township Mayor Admits Taking Bribes

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NEWARK – The former mayor of Brick Township pleaded guilty today to accepting cash bribes from an unnamed real estate developer in Brick, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Joseph C. Scarpelli, 67, of Brick Township, a former mayor and councilman in Brick, pleaded guilty today before U.S. District Judge Susan D. Wigenton to a one-count Information charging him with accepting and agreeing to accept corrupt cash payments directly and indirectly from the developer in Brick Township. Scarpelli admitted that his intention in taking the bribes was to, in turn, use his official position as mayor to assist the developer with township business as opportunities arose.

At his plea hearing, Scarpelli admitted that, during while he was mayor from 1998 to late 2003, he accepted cash payments totaling at least \$5,000 dollars from the developer. Scarpelli also admitted that he accepted the cash payments knowing the payments were intended to influence him to help the developer obtain approvals for potential projects in the Township. For instance, Scarpelli specifically admitted receiving approximately \$500 in cash from the developer in April 2003.

Judge Wigenton scheduled sentencing for May 29. Scarpelli is free in the meantime on a \$50,000 unsecured bond.

“Our corruption investigation in Brick Township is continuing, and we will follow the evidence wherever it takes us,” said Christie.

The charge to which Scarpelli pleaded guilty carries a statutory maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. However, under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, Scarpelli faces a probable sentencing range of between 24 and 30 months in federal prison.

In determining the sentence, Judge Wigenton will consult the advisory sentencing guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence and can sentence within, above or below the guidelines range.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

The guilty plea of Scarpelli results from a combined investigation conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Ocean County Prosecutor’s Office and the Brick Township Police Department. Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI's Red Bank Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Leslie G. Wiser, Jr.,

investigators with Ocean County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Thomas Kelaher, and police officers with Brick Township, under the direction of Chief of Police Ronald Dougard.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Marc Larkins, the Chief of the Government Fraud Unit.

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Defense Counsel: Kevin Kelly, Esq., Brick; and Michael Nolan, Esq., Brick