

Department of Justice

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FORMER HEAD OF CITY AGENCY SENTENCED FOR STEALING FEDERAL FUNDS

BUFFALO, N.Y.--U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Timothy Wanamaker, 47, former head of a City agency responsible for overseeing the revitalization of Buffalo, who was convicted of theft from programs receiving Federal funds, was sentenced to three years probation by U.S. District Judge Richard J. Arcara. The defendant was also ordered to pay \$27,702.03 in restitution to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Paul J. Campana and Joseph M. Guerra, who handled the case, stated that the defendant served as Executive Director of the City of Buffalo's Office of Strategic Planning from 2004 until 2008. In this capacity, Wanamaker supervised both the Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation (BERC), of which the defendant also held the title of President, and the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency. BERC – a disbanded City agency – at the time was responsible for promoting economic development with funds obtained from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

While serving as BERC President, Wanamaker improperly used a credit card provided to him by BERC for official business, for a wide range of non-work related expenses. Specifically, Wanamaker used the credit card to pay for such personal expenses as lodging, car rentals, entertainment, and other costs accrued by his family and guests. The costs arose during trips to such locations as San Francisco, Las Vegas, Washington, D.C., and Miami, Florida.

HUD provides millions of dollars annually to the City of Buffalo to assist the City's economic development and neighborhood revitalization efforts, and federal law requires HUD funded agencies such as BERC to spend money in accordance with their mission.

“Those working for any level of Government have an obligation to perform their jobs honestly and to the best of their ability,” said U.S. Attorney Hochul. “Because the misdeeds of even a single public official can hurt the community in many ways, this Office has made the prosecution of corruption a priority. Under no circumstances will the Office, or our law enforcement partners, permit an official to steal taxpayer money.”

The sentencing is the culmination of an investigation by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent In Charge Christopher M. Piehota, and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Cary Rubenstein.

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