



U. S. Department of Justice

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LAST CONSPIRATOR PLEADS GUILTY IN \$5 MILLION FRAUD OVER HURRICANE MICHAEL CLEANUP IN LYNN HAVEN

PANAMA CITY, FLORIDA – The last remaining defendant indicted in a \$5 million fraud against the City of Lynn Haven has pled guilty to a charge stemming from the Hurricane Michael-related scheme. Lawrence Keefe, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Florida, announced that David Wayne Horton, who was the city's Community Services Director at the time of the fraud, entered a guilty plea to wire fraud. The charge stemmed from a 35-count federal indictment that included the former Lynn Haven city manager.

The indictment, handed down by a federal grand jury, alleged that in the wake of Hurricane Michael, the City of Lynn Haven entered into contracts for debris removal. The indictment alleged that ECS and Greenleaf submitted invoices that were false and fraudulent, but then-City Manager Michael White approved them and directed city employees to immediately pay ECS and Greenleaf for those invoices. The other defendants took various actions to advance the conspiracy, which defrauded Lynn Haven of approximately \$5 million.

In entering his guilty plea, Horton admitted to signing and certifying fraudulent time sheets that purported to show how various individuals had performed hurricane cleanup work for the city. According to a Statement of Facts entered with Horton's plea, when he was interviewed by federal agents in 2018, Horton made false statements to agents claiming that he had signed and certified the time sheets and that the number of workers on the time sheets had actually provided the services represented.

"With today's guilty plea, everyone who has been indicted thus far has admitted to their role in a shameless scheme to defraud the taxpayers. These individuals violated the public trust, and now they will pay the consequences. The plea closes this chapter of our ongoing investigation, but our Public Trust Unit will continue to pursue those involved in similar conduct within Bay County and throughout the Northern District," U.S. Attorney Keefe said.

Four of the five defendants named in the indictment last November had previously pled guilty. They are former Lynn Haven City Manager Michael Edward White, ECS owner David Mitchell

White, Shannon Delores Rodriguez, a/k/a Shannon Delores Harris, and Joshua Daniel Anderson, owner of Greenleaf Lawn Care of Bay County, all of Panama City.

"The citizens of Florida are entitled to decisions based on the best interests of the public, not the best interests of corrupt public officials and the individuals who pay them bribes," said Rachel L. Rojas, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Jacksonville Division. "The FBI is committed to aggressively pursuing those who violate the trust placed in them by the public, and holding them accountable for their actions."

As a result of his guilty plea, Horton faces a maximum of 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release, a \$250,000 fine, and a \$100 special monetary assessment to be paid prior to sentencing. He also agreed to pay full restitution to his victims and to forfeit all property derived from the proceeds of the fraud or used to facilitate it. Sentencing hearing is scheduled for September 29, 2020, at 3:00pm at the United States Courthouse in Tallahassee.

"I am pleased that those that took advantage of us in the aftermath of Hurricane Michael will be held accountable," Sheriff Tommy Ford said. "I look forward to our continuing investigation with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Attorney's Office."

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and Bay County Sheriff's Office conducted the investigation. The case has been prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen M. Kunz.

The United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Florida is one of 94 offices that serve as the nation's principal litigators under the direction of the Attorney General. To access public court documents online, please visit the [U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida](https://www.uscourts.gov/uscourts/USADistrictCourts/Florida) website. For more information about the United States Attorney's Office, Northern District of Florida, visit <http://www.justice.gov/usao/fln/index.html>.

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