

# NEWS

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United States Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey  
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor  
Newark, New Jersey 07102

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***Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney***

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***More Information?*** Call the Assistant U.S. Attorney or other contact listed below to see if more information is available.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Oct. 9, 2008

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Former Asbury Park Councilman John Hamilton,  
the Last of the “Monmouth 11,” Convicted of Taking Bribes

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(More)

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NEWARK – A federal court jury yesterday convicted former Asbury Park deputy mayor John J. Hamilton, Jr. on all counts against him in connection with his acceptance of a driveway paving job and a \$2,000 cash bribe from a cooperating government witness whom Hamilton believed was involved in construction and demolition work, money laundering, and illegal loansharking, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Hamilton, 58, of Asbury Park, was convicted late Wednesday of one count each of conspiracy to commit extortion, attempted extortion under color of official right, bribery, making false statements to the FBI, and attempted witness tampering. The jury deliberated for about seven hours over two days before delivering its guilty verdicts on all counts against Hamilton.

U.S. District Judge Jose L. Linares scheduled sentencing for Jan. 21. On the convictions for attempted extortion and conspiracy, Hamilton faces a statutory maximum penalty of 20 years in prison. The bribery count carries a 10-year statutory maximum sentence; false statements, five years, and witness tampering, 10 years.

Hamilton was the last to be convicted of 11 sitting and former public officials from Monmouth County charged in February 2005 with taking corrupt cash payments and other corrupt favors from an undercover cooperating witness and undercover FBI agents, who purported to work for the cooperating witness in the construction and demolition business. The public officials also understood that the undercover cooperator and agents were purportedly involved in loansharking and money laundering.

Of the 11 officials and former officials charged, eight pleaded guilty, Hamilton and former Middletown Committeeman Raymond O'Grady were convicted at trial, and former Keyport Councilman Robert Hyer passed away. Operation Bid Rig, which encompassed the group of 11, as well as former Ocean Township Mayor Terrence Weldon and others, resulted in the convictions of six mayors and more than 20 public officials in total.

“We and the FBI are justifiably proud of our record of prosecution of corrupt public officials in Monmouth County,” said Christie. “The investigation revealed a shockingly wide swath of individuals who were willing to sell their positions of trust and abuse their power and influence. It is our hope and belief that this investigation and the convictions also succeeded in acting as a deterrent for others going forward.”

Hamilton was tried by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Joyce Malliet and Mark McCarren of the Special Prosecutions Division. An earlier trial of Hamilton in November 2007, ended with a hung jury. The case was investigated by Special Agents of the FBI's Red Bank Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun in Newark.

Hamilton was the deputy mayor and a councilman in Asbury Park in 2001, when he accepted the installation of a driveway at his home valued at approximately \$5,000 from the cooperating witness. Hamilton also accepted a \$2,000 cash bribe from the cooperating witness through an intermediary. Hamilton accepted these corrupt benefits in exchange for attempting to assist the cooperating witness in obtaining emergency no-bid construction and demolition work from Asbury Park city government.

In imposing the actual sentence, Judge Linares will consult the advisory U.S. 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. Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

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Defense Counsel for Hamilton: Michael Baldassare, Esq., Newark