

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
401 Market Street, Fourth Floor
Camden, New Jersey 08101



Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney

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

News on the Internet: News Releases, related documents and advisories are posted short-term at our website, along with links to our archived releases at the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. ***Go to:*** <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/press/>

Assistant U.S. Attorneys

DAVID A. BOCIAN

609-989-2399

CHRISTOPHER J. GRAMICCIONI

973-297-2067

pres1210.rel

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 10, 2007

Pleasantville School Board President Admits Attempted Extortion

(More)

Greg Reinert, PAO
Public Affairs Office

856-757-5233
973-645-2888

Breaking News (NJ) <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/press/index.html>

CAMDEN – Pleasantville Board of Education president James A. Pressley pleaded guilty today to attempted extortion, admitting that he accepted bribes in return for his official assistance in steering public contracts to an insurance brokerage company and a roofing business, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Pressley, 23, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Jerome B. Simandle to a one-count Information, which charged him with attempted extortion under color of official right. Pressley is free on a \$200,000 bond pending his sentencing, which is scheduled for March 20.

Pressley was arrested on Sept. 6, 2007, along with 10 other public officials and one private individual. The arrests resulted from a public corruption investigation that progressed from southern to northern New Jersey.

At his plea hearing, Pressley admitted that he accepted three corrupt payments totaling \$10,800 between May 2006 and July 2006. Pressley admitted that he took the corrupt payments in exchange for his official assistance in attempting to obtain Pleasantville Board of Education (PBOE) contracts for the roofing business.

Pressley also admitted that on Sept. 12, 2006, he and four other members of the PBOE voted to pass a resolution authorizing a contract for insurance services to an insurance brokerage company. Pressley admitted that he accepted corrupt cash payments of \$7,500 and \$17,500 on Sept. 13 and Sept. 21, respectively, in exchange for voting for the PBOE insurance contract.

Pressley agreed to forfeit \$40,800, which represents the total amount of corrupt payments he received.

The charge to which Pressley pleaded guilty carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Simandle 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, including acceptance of responsibility. The judge, however, has wide discretion and 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 of that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, for the investigation involving Pressley and the other defendants. Christie also thanked prosecutors and investigators with the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Theodore F.L. Housel, for their assistance in the investigation.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys David A. Bocian and Christopher J. Gramiccioni of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Trenton and Special Prosecutions Division in Newark, respectively.

– end –

Defense counsel: Edward J. Crisonino, Esq. Haddon Township