



Department of Investigation

Press Release

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CONTRACTORS ARRESTED FOR FILING FALSE VENDEX QUESTIONNAIRES ***-- Failed To Disclose They Were Subjects Of Prior DOI Investigation --***

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of 2 Long Island contractors, THOMAS and SANTA RAGONESI, for concealing, in a bid to obtain a \$150,000 subcontract for the construction of the City's Coney Island Baseball Park, the fact that they had been the subjects of an earlier, 1997, DOI investigation.

According to Commissioner Gill Hearn, under Procurement Policy Board rules, contractors and sub-contractors seeking to be awarded competitively bid City contracts in excess of \$100,000, together with their principals, must complete Vendor Information Exchange System (VENDEX) questionnaires. The questionnaires, compiled by the Mayor's Office of Contracts, require companies and their principals to disclose such information as ownership structure, criminal history, and any governmental investigations. The questionnaires are submitted to the City agency for which the work or service will be performed, and that agency in turn forwards to DOI information in the questionnaires for a "name-check" review.

Commissioner Gill Hearn said DOI began its most recent investigation in April 2001, when the City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) requested that DOI conduct a name-check of the RAGONESIS' company, B&T RAGONESI Inc., located at 789 Foxhurst Road in Baldwin, Long Island, a proposed subcontractor to Turner Construction Company.

The investigation disclosed that the RAGONESIS, on the company's VENDEX Business Entity questionnaire, dated January 16, 2001, and on the VENDEX Principal questionnaires, dated January 16, 2001, and February 23, 2001, all filed with EDC on March 9, 2001, falsely swore that neither they, nor their business, had been the subject of any federal, state, or local prosecuting or investigative agency inquiry, nor had they been the subject of a criminal investigation by any federal, state or local prosecuting or investigative agency, within the past five years.

In contradiction to their representation in the VENDEX questionnaires, the RAGONESIS had in fact each been the subject of a prior investigation conducted by DOI, which culminated in January 1997.

THOMAS RAGONESI, 77, and SANTA RAGONESI, 75, of 2718 Wildale Road in Baldwin, were each charged with two counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a Class E felony. If convicted, they each face up to 4 years in prison.

Contractors Arrested For Filing False Vendex Questionnaires

Commissioner Gill Hearn expressed her sincere appreciation to the staff of EDC for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Julia Davis, DOI's Inspector General for EDC, and members of her staff, including Confidential Investigators Alicia George and Lourdes December.

The Office of Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Joanne Siegmund is assigned to handle the matter.