



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation  
JOCELYN E. STRAUBER  
COMMISSIONER

180 MAIDEN LANE  
NEW YORK, NY 10038  
212-825-5900

Release #11-2022  
[nyc.gov/doi](http://nyc.gov/doi)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
MONDAY, MAY 23, 2022**

**CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI  
(212) 825-5931**

**FORMER CEO OF NEW YORK CITY-FUNDED BRONX PARENT HOUSING NETWORK  
SENTENCED TO PRISON TERM OF 27 MONTHS IN FEDERAL COURT**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), issued the following statement on today’s sentencing of VICTOR RIVERA to a term of 27 months’ imprisonment and two years of supervised release. In February 2022, RIVERA pleaded guilty to conspiring to enrich himself through bribes and kickbacks provided to him by contractors of the Bronx Parent Housing Network (“BPHN”). He was sentenced today in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York by U.S. District Judge Sidney H. Stein. DOI investigated this matter in partnership with the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “As the head of a City-funded nonprofit that received millions of dollars in public funds, Victor Rivera had an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. Instead, he chose to exploit the system and engineer a bribery-and-kickback scheme to benefit himself and his relatives. As a just result, Victor Rivera is headed to federal prison, while BPHN continues to serve the public under an ongoing DOI monitorship.”

RIVERA, 62, of Stony Point, N.Y., was the President and Chief Executive Officer of BPHN between 2013 and 2020 when he ran an illegal scheme of soliciting and accepting bribes and kickbacks from contractors doing work related to or for the City-funded nonprofit he ran. As a result of this illegal conduct, RIVERA obtained at least hundreds of thousands of dollars in illicit gains. RIVERA is no longer employed by BPHN, a City-funded nonprofit that operates shelters and affordable housing facilities in New York City. RIVERA also laundered some of the corrupt payments through intermediary entities he controlled, including through a purported consulting company nominally owned by one of RIVERA’s relatives.

Commissioner Strauber thanked U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Damian Williams, and his staff, for their partnership and successful prosecution of this matter. The investigation was handled by Assistant United States Attorneys David Abramowicz and Tara La Morte of the Money Laundering and Transnational Criminal Enterprises Unit at the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York.

The investigation was conducted by DOI’s Office of the Inspector General for City-funded Nonprofits, specifically Senior Investigative Auditor Jeffrey Freeman, under the supervision of Chief Forensic Auditor/First Deputy Inspector General Ivette Morales, Senior Inspector General Andrew Sein, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel G. Cort. DOI’s investigation was conducted in partnership with Special Agents of the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York.

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**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**  
*Southern District of New York*

U.S. ATTORNEY DAMIAN WILLIAMS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Tuesday, September 20, 2022  
<http://www.justice.gov/usao/nys>

CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
Nicholas Biase  
(212) 637-2600

**Former Disaster Relief Consultant And Retired NYPD  
Inspector Pleads Guilty To Conspiring To Commit Federal  
Program Fraud In Connection With New York City's  
Hurricane Sandy Recovery Efforts**

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Jocelyn Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced that WALTER MELNICK, a retired Inspector of the New York City Police Department and a disaster relief consultant, pled guilty to conspiring to commit federal program fraud in connection with his work for an Illinois-based consulting firm ("Company-1") that provided Hurricane Sandy-related recovery services to the City of New York. MELNICK surrendered today and pled guilty before U.S. Magistrate Judge Valerie Figueredo in federal court in Manhattan. The case has been assigned to U.S. District Judge Victor Marrero.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: "As New York City worked to recover from the devastation of Hurricane Sandy, Walter Melnick conspired to misuse funds that were allocated to heal the city in the wake of this disaster, instead attempting to use the funds for his own benefit. I commend the Department of Investigation and this Office for holding to account those who conspire to defraud invaluable federal programs."

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn Strauber said: "This defendant was hired to help New York City with Hurricane Sandy relief efforts; instead, he conspired to defraud the City's Office of Management and Budget of almost three hundred and ninety thousand dollars in federal disaster recovery funds. Today, he plead guilty to that conduct, and agreed to pay back those funds to the City. DOI thanks the Office of Management and Budget for its assistance. We will continue to work with our local and federal law enforcement partners to hold accountable those who would seek to defraud the public and to ensure that public funds are used for their intended purpose."

According to the allegations in the Information, court filings, and statements made in court:<sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As the introductory phrase signifies, the entirety of the text of the Information constitutes only allegations, and every fact described herein should be treated as an allegation.

Beginning in or about 2013, in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, the City of New York received billions of dollars in federal money to fund Hurricane Sandy-related recovery efforts. The City used certain of these funds to hire Company-1 to assist with Hurricane Sandy relief (the “Sandy Project”). Company-1 hired MELNICK as an independent contractor to work on the Sandy Project.

Between in or about 2013 and in or about 2019, while working on the Sandy Project for Company-1, MELNICK participated in two schemes to defraud the New York City Office of Management and Budget (“NYC-OMB”). First, between in or about January 2013 and in or about October 2017, MELNICK conspired with at least one other individual (“CC-1”) and submitted fraudulent documentation to NYC-OMB via Company-1, falsely claiming that he was renting and living in an apartment in New York in order to obtain lodging and travel reimbursements. Upon learning that this first fraudulent scheme was under investigation, MELNICK told CC-1 to lie to law enforcement. Second, between in or about 2017 and in or about 2019, while working on the Sandy Project, MELNICK conspired with at least two individuals, including another employee of Company-1 (“CC-2”) and a family member (“CC-3”), to purchase a property that CC-2 used to submit fraudulent reimbursement requests to NYC-OMB via Company-1 for lodging expenses to which CC-2 was not entitled. CC-2 transferred the proceeds from this fraudulent scheme to CC-3, who used part of the proceeds to pay the mortgage and maintenance for the property and retained the rest. In or about March 2022, MELNICK made false statements to the Government in connection with this second fraudulent scheme.

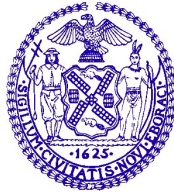
\* \* \*

WALTER MELNICK, 77, of Treasure Island, Florida, pled guilty to one count of conspiring to commit federal program fraud, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison. Under the terms of his plea agreement, MELNICK agreed to forfeit \$387,749 and to pay restitution to NYC-OMB in the amount of \$387,749.

The maximum potential sentence in this case is prescribed by Congress and is provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant would be determined by a judge. MELNICK is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Marrero on January 20, 2023, at 10 a.m.

Mr. Williams praised the outstanding investigative work of DOI.

This matter is being handled by the Office’s Public Corruption Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jane Kim and Catherine Ghosh are in charge of the prosecution.



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Release #25-2022  
nyc.gov/doi

**REPORTERS/EDITORS PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS A CORRECTED RELEASE AND UPDATES WITH THE CORRECT CHARGE THAT HEAVEN WEST PLED TO. PLEASE SEE YELLOW HIGHLIGHTED CORRECTIONS.**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2022**

**CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI  
(212) 825-5931**

### **FINAL TWO DEFENDANTS PLEAD GUILTY IN FRAUD INVOLVING COVID-19 HOTEL ROOM ISOLATION PROGRAM**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced today the guilty pleas of the two remaining defendants in a four-defendant scheme to defraud the New York City COVID-19 Hotel Room Isolation Program of over \$400,000. The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York prosecuted this case.

Today, HEAVEN WEST, 22, of Atlanta, Georgia, pled guilty in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, before U.S. Magistrate Judge James L. Cott, to one felony count of Wire Fraud. Upon conviction, this offense is punishable by up to 20 years in prison. WEST is scheduled to be sentenced on May 18, 2023.

On Tuesday, December 13, 2022, TATIANA BENJAMIN, 28, of Brooklyn, N.Y., also known as "TA BANKS," and "LYRIC MUVAA," pled guilty in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, also before Magistrate Judge Cott, to one felony count of Conspiracy to Commit Wire Fraud. Upon conviction, this offense is punishable by up to 20 years in prison. Sentencing is scheduled for May 18, 2023.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, "With these guilty pleas, all four defendants are held accountable for their misuse of a City program intended to serve healthcare workers, COVID-19 patients and others impacted by the pandemic, for their personal profit. DOI, our fellow City agencies, and our law enforcement partners are committed to protecting City resources and ensuring that those resources benefit their intended recipients, and I thank the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York for their prosecution of this matter and the City Office of Emergency Management for their cooperation on the investigation."

According to the indictment to which BENJAMIN and WEST pled guilty, they participated in a scheme to defraud the City's Hotel Isolation Program, which provided free hotel rooms for patients convalescing from COVID-19 and for healthcare workers who needed to self-isolate due to exposure, by falsely claiming to be healthcare workers, misappropriating actual healthcare workers' identifying information, and using Facebook to advertise fraudulently-obtained hotel rooms to individuals who did not meet the Hotel Isolation Program's requirements.

BENJAMIN and WEST were charged in October 2021, along with two other co-defendants, TATIANA DANIEL and CHANETTE LEWIS. On November 22, 2022, DANIEL pled guilty to one felony count of

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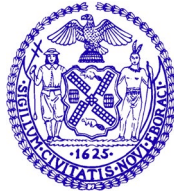
Conspiracy to Commit Wire Fraud; that release can be found here: <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2022/November/22Daniel11.22.2022.pdf>. On December 2, 2022, LEWIS pled guilty to two counts of Conspiracy to Commit Wire Fraud; that release can be found here: [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2022/December/23Lewis\\_12022022.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2022/December/23Lewis_12022022.pdf). The October 2021 arrest release can be found here: <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2021/October/COVID-19HotelFraudPR.10.05.2021.pdf>.

Commissioner Strauber thanked U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Damian Williams and his staff for the prosecution of this matter, which was handled by Assistant United States Attorney Michael Neff of the Complex Frauds and Cybercrime Unit; and Jonathan Mellone, Special Agent-in-Charge, New York Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Labor - Office of Inspector General and his staff for their partnership on the investigation. Commissioner Strauber also thanked New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Zachary Iscol and his staff for their cooperation on the Hotel Isolation Program investigation.

At DOI, the Hotel Isolation Program investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for Emergency Management, Confidential Investigator Hope Stagnaro, under the supervision of Assistant Inspector General Aleksandro Tilka, Deputy Inspector General Arturo Sanchez, and Inspector General Audrey Feldman. The investigation was supervised by Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel G. Cort.

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Release #17-2022  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2022**

**CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI**  
**(212) 825-5931**

**NEW JERSEY MAN CONVICTED OF SCHEME TO DEFRAUD NYC DURING PANDEMIC SENTENCED TO FIVE YEARS PROBATION, 600 HOURS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE AND AN \$8,000 FINE**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), issued the following statement on today’s sentencing of RONALD ROMANO, 60, to five years of probation, 600 hours of community service, and an \$8,000 fine. ROMANO pleaded guilty in May 2022 to conspiring to violate the Defense Production Act, a misdemeanor, in connection with a scheme to supply Personal Protective Equipment (“PPE”) to New York City that he did not possess or have authority to sell, at a substantial mark-up. ROMANO, a used car dealer from Manalapan, N.J., engaged in this illegal conduct during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time when the City of New York was urgently seeking this essential equipment to protect its frontline workers. Today’s sentencing took place in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York before U.S. District Judge Andrew L. Carter, Jr. DOI investigated this matter in partnership with the office of Damian Williams, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “Mr. Romano exploited this City’s need for PPE during a worldwide health crisis to turn a personal profit at public expense. But sharp-eyed City procurement specialists, DOI, and federal prosecutors thwarted his criminal scheme and, as a result, Mr. Romano has a federal conviction and other significant penalties as a result of his effort to defraud New York City. DOI and the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York are committed to pursuing schemes that jeopardize the health and safety of New Yorkers and taxpayer funds.”

According to the indictment, between February 2020 and April 2020, ROMANO participated in a scheme to price gouge the City of New York in the early months of the pandemic by making false and fraudulent statements to induce the City to pay more than \$45 million for what ROMANO represented to be 3M-brand N95 respirators, an amount more than 400% above the list price for such respirators. As of March 25, 2020, certain PPE, including those N95 respirators, were designated as scarce materials under the Defense Production Act. At the time of the scheme, the City of New York was in critical need of lifesaving PPE. The false statements included ROMANO’s submission of a document to the City that identified a fictitious PPE deal with the Florida Division of Emergency Management in which ROMANO claimed to be involved.

ROMANO was charged in May 2020 and you can read that release here: [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2022/May/13RomanoGP05\\_31\\_2022.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2022/May/13RomanoGP05_31_2022.pdf). ROMANO pleaded guilty in May 2022; and that release can be read here [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2020/May/RonaldRomano\\_arrest\\_PR\\_final.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doi/press-releases/2020/May/RonaldRomano_arrest_PR_final.pdf).

Commissioner Strauber thanked U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Damian Williams, and his staff, for their partnership and successful prosecution of this matter. The investigation was handled by Assistant United States Attorneys Nicholas W. Chiuchiolo and Timothy V. Capozzi of the Complex

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Frauds and Cybercrime Unit in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. At DOI, the matter was investigated by Assistant Inspector General Anastasia Plakas, under the supervision of Inspector General Ann Petterson, in DOI's Office of the Inspector General for the City Department of Citywide Administrative Services, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel G. Cort.

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U.S. Department of Justice

**Breon Peace**  
*United States Attorney*  
*Eastern District of New York*

271 Cadman Plaza East  
Brooklyn, New York 11201

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**September 9, 2022**

**Contact:**

**John Marzulli**  
**Danielle Blustein Hass**  
**United States Attorney's Office**  
**(718) 254-6323**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**DEFENDANT PLEADS GUILTY TO ACCEPTING MORE THAN \$500,000 IN BRIBES  
IN CONNECTION WITH A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR  
NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC WORKS CONTRACT**

***Defendant Oversaw Contracts for Company That Sells Warranties To New York City  
Homeowners Covering Repairs to Sewer And Water Pipes***

Earlier today in federal court in Brooklyn, George Djurasevic pled guilty to bribery, in violation of the Travel Act, admitting that he accepted more than half-a-million dollars in bribe payments in his role as a manager of a company (the "Company") contracted by the New York City Water Board (NYCWB) to provide sewer and water pipe repair services to New York City homeowners. Djurasevic also pled guilty to tax evasion. Today's proceeding was held before United States Magistrate Judge Peggy Kuo. When sentenced, Djurasevic faces a total of 10 years in prison.

Breon Peace, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; Michael J. Driscoll, Jr., Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI); Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation; and Thomas Fattorusso, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, New York Field Office (IRS), announced the guilty plea.

"Motivated by greed, Djurasevic flushed away his integrity, accepting bribes and leaving New Yorkers to pay the bill, including when home repairs were not even completed," stated United States Attorney Breon Peace. "That the process of overseeing city contracts on warranties for costly repairs was corrupted is a betrayal to New York homeowners."

"As he admitted with today's plea, Mr. Djurasevic abused his position for personal gain and passed the tab on to New York City taxpayers. Those responsible for helping their fellow citizens obtain basic utility services have a duty to do so in an honest manner, not one motivated by greedy self-interest. The FBI and our partners remain dedicated to bringing

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those who take bribes at the expense of the public to justice,” stated FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Driscoll.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, "As today's guilty plea establishes, instead of providing responsible oversight of City repair projects, the defendant used his status as a City contractor to line his own pockets with hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribe payments. DOI and its federal partners will continue to thwart those who corrupt City processes and victimize New Yorkers."

“Djurasevic lined his pockets with ill-gotten gains and left the people of New York City to pay the tab. He then underpaid his taxes by more than a hundred thousand dollars, revenue used to fund programs for Americans who need it. It is clear that Djurasevic had little regard for the collateral damage of his schemes, and with this guilty plea he is one step closer to justice,” said Thomas M. Fattorusso, Special Agent in Charge for IRS:CI in New York.

According to court documents and facts presented at the guilty plea proceeding, the Company was awarded a multi-million-dollar contract by the NYCWB to sell warranties to New York City homeowners covering repairs to sewer and water pipes. Djurasevic was responsible for overseeing the Company's sewer and water line repair work carried out by the Company's plumbing sub-contractors in Staten Island, Queens and Brooklyn.

Djurasevic accepted approximately \$500,000 in bribes over five years from a sub-contractor in exchange for, among other things, allowing the sub-contractor to overbill for work performed or to not perform certain repairs to the homeowners' sewer and water pipes, as well as for his review of the sub-contractor's determination as to whether repairs were covered by the Company's warranty. Djurasevic also failed to report his true income to the Internal Revenue Service, which resulted in his failure to pay more than \$114,000 in taxes. When sentenced, Djurasevic faces a total of 10 years in prison.

The government's case is being prosecuted by the office's Public Integrity Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Philip Pilmar, Robert Polemeni and Dana Rehnquist are in charge of the prosecution.

**The Defendant:**

GEORGE DJURASEVIC

Age: 54

Armonk, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 21-CR-551 (LDH)



**ALVIN L. BRAGG JR.,  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 14, 2022

Contact: Kay Nguyen, [nguyenk@dany.nyc.gov](mailto:nguyenk@dany.nyc.gov)

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**LONGTIME CITY CONTRACTOR PLEADS GUILTY TO \$1 MILLION  
INSURANCE FRAUD**

*Dragonetti Brothers Landscaping Paid \$1.2 Million in Restitution, Barred from New York City Department of Design and Construction and New York City Business Integrity Commission Contracts for 3 Years*

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin L. Bragg, Jr., and New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”) Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber today announced the guilty pleas and sentencing of DRAGONETTI BROTHERS LANDSCAPING, NURSERY, & FLORIST INC. (“DRAGONETTI BROTHERS LANDSCAPING”), and D.B. DEMOLITION, INC. (“D.B. Demolition”), as well as their respective presidents NICHOLAS DRAGONETTI, 49, and VITO DRAGONETTI, 53, for evading more than \$1 million in insurance premiums while working on City of New York contracts for sidewalk and road repair.

Corporate defendant DRAGONETTI BROTHERS LANDSCAPING pleaded guilty to Insurance Fraud in the Second Degree. Corporate defendant D.B. DEMOLITION pleaded guilty to Insurance Fraud in the Second Degree. VITO and NICHOLAS DRAGONETTI each pleaded guilty to Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the Second Degree.

The Manhattan District Attorney’s Office’s Construction Fraud Task Force and DOI led the joint investigation with assistance from the New York State Insurance Fund (“NYSIF”) and the New York City Business Integrity Commission (“BIC”).

“Workers doing dangerous work should be afforded every protection possible, yet these city contractors misclassified their employees for financial gain. As a result, they put their workers at risk, while also undermining the integrity of the public bidding process,” said **District Attorney Bragg**. “Today’s outcome,

especially requiring oversight monitors, sends a clear message that companies cannot line their pockets at the expense of their employees.”

“Dragonetti Landscaping, D.B. Demolition, and its principals placed workers' livelihoods in jeopardy to enrich themselves, pocketing more than \$1 million in unpaid insurance premiums. As part of their guilty plea, the defendants have paid restitution to the New York State Insurance Fund and will be supervised by integrity monitors that report to DOI and BIC,” said **DOI Commissioner Strauber**. “DOI thanks the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office, its Construction Fraud Task Force, and the City Business Integrity Commission for their commitment to pursuing unscrupulous businesses that seek to profit at the expense of workers on City projects.”

“Holding companies accountable to regulatory standards, especially when a criminal case is involved, is crucial to ensuring public trust and safety,” said **BIC Commissioner and Chair Elizabeth Crotty**. “BIC is proud to have worked with our law enforcement partners at the Manhattan District Attorney, the City Department of Investigation and the New York State Insurance Fund on this investigation and we thank them for their hard work.”

As part of this plea, the defendants have paid \$1.2 million in restitution to NYSIF and have been debarred from all New York City Department of Design and Construction (“DDC”) and BIC contracts for the next three years. This means that any firm, corporation, partnership, or association in which it has a substantial interest (defined as at least ten percent of ownership) is ineligible to apply for or receive any contract or subcontract awarded by DDC and BIC.

In addition, both companies have put a monitor in place to ensure good corporate citizenship/best practices going forward. DRAGONETTI BROTHERS LANDSCAPING must pay for an integrity monitor that reports to DOI and BIC. As a result of that monitorship, the company instituted remedial measures that include barring VITO and NICHOLAS DRAGONETTI or any entities they own from working on DDC projects, establishing a code of conduct and training employees on it, and moving their company to a new facility that is not owned by DRAGONETTI BROTHERS LANDSCAPING or its affiliates.

For three years, the monitor, under DOI and BIC management, will oversee the company's operations, making sure, among other things, it adheres to all the remedial measures, including instituting and training employees on a new code of conduct; creating a 24-hour hotline number to facilitate reporting of improper conduct; moving the shares of VITO AND NICHOLAS DRAGONETTI into a trust; naming a new Managing Director for DRAGONETTI BROTHERS LANDSCAPING; and hiring a worker's compensation premium expert to ensure the correct premiums are paid.

Since 1998, DRAGONETTI BROTHERS has secured more than a hundred New York City contracts for park landscaping and maintenance, as well as for sidewalk reconstruction and pedestrian crosswalk ramp construction. Sidewalk and ramp construction workers have higher-risk jobs that include using heavy machinery to demolish and replace pavement and ramps, and accordingly, a higher workers' compensation

insurance classification.

DRAGONETTI BROTHERS bid on and won contracts for excavation, sidewalk reconstruction, and pedestrian ramp replacement for residential blocks throughout the City totaling millions of dollars, and falsely classified 217 laborers, foremen, and heavy-equipment operators as florists, office workers, or sales representatives.

DRAGONETTI BROTHERS evaded more than \$1.1 million in insurance premiums between 2017 and 2019 by intentionally misclassifying numerous employees on its applications to NYSIF for workers' compensation insurance in order to avoid paying required premiums.

During the same time period, D.B. DEMOLITION evaded more than \$81,000 in insurance premiums by also misclassifying several workers in NYSIF paperwork, claiming the individuals were office workers while simultaneously listing them as commercial drivers in paperwork filed with BIC, the agency that oversees the private carting industry in New York City.

Workers are encouraged to send tips related to wage theft, fraud, and safety lapses in the construction industry directly to the Manhattan District Attorney's Office's Construction Fraud Task Force through text or WhatsApp at (646) 712-0298. Workers can send tips anonymously, in any language, and regardless of immigration status.

Assistant D.A. Rachana Pathak (Supervising Attorney of the Construction Fraud Task Force) handled the prosecution of this case under the supervision of Assistant D.A.s Michael Ohm (Deputy Chief of the Rackets Bureau), Judy Salwen (Principal Deputy Chief of the Rackets Bureau), and Jodie Kane (Chief of the Rackets Bureau), Christopher Conroy (Senior Advisor to the Investigation Division) and Executive Assistant D.A. Susan Hoffinger (Chief of the Investigation Division). Task Force Coordinator Danielle Corbett assisted with the investigation, as did Former Assistant D.A. Leah Keith, former Paralegal Stacey Kim and Forensic Accountant Investigator Wei Man Tang.

District Attorney Bragg thanked DOI Inspectors General Juve Hippolyte, Cynthia Irizarry and Ann Petterson, Assistant Inspector General Anastasia Plakas, and Special Investigator Heather Smith; NYSIF and Senior Auditor Granville Mo; and BIC and Associate Commissioner of Legal Affairs and Deputy General Counsel David Mandell for their assistance with the investigation.

#### *Defendant Information*

DRAGONETTI BROTHERS LANDSCAPING, NURSERY, & FLORIST  
Convicted:

- Insurance Fraud in the Second Degree, a class C felony

D.B. DEMOLITION, INC.

Convicted:

- Insurance Fraud in the Second Degree, a class C felony

NICHOLAS DRAGONETTI

Bellmore, NY

Convicted:

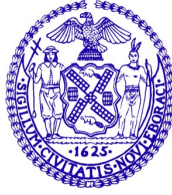
- Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the Second Degree, a class A misdemeanor

VITO DRAGONETTI

Bellmore, NY

Convicted:

- Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the Second Degree, a class A misdemeanor



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

JOCELYN E. STRAUBER  
COMMISSIONER

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**MONDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2022**

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### **CITY CONTRACTOR PLEADS GUILTY TO FILING FALSE RECEIPTS WITH THE CITY**

Jocelyn E. Strauber, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), announced today the arrest and guilty plea of the owner of a Brooklyn construction company for submitting fake receipts, including invoices for a fictitious company, with the City Administration for Children’s Services (ACS). DOI began its investigation into this matter when ACS reported to DOI discrepancies in the receipts submitted by the company, an ACS contractor. The Office of Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg prosecuted this case.

Shahidul Islam, 54, of Brooklyn, N.Y., and owner of Brooklyn-based Kaas Construction, surrendered today on 22 counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class E Felony, and immediately pleaded guilty to Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the Second Degree, a class A misdemeanor. He was sentenced today in Manhattan Criminal Court to a conditional discharge as part of a plea agreement.

DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber said, “Submitting falsified invoices to the City is a crime. Even as ACS questioned this defendant’s receipts, he continued to submit more fraudulent filings to the City. To ensure that contracting officers City-wide are aware of this defendant’s misconduct, DOI has flagged this vendor and his company in PASSPort, the City’s digital procurement platform. I want to thank ACS for reporting this issue to DOI and the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office for prosecuting this matter.”

According to the complaint and DOI’s investigation, between 2015 and 2017, Kaas Construction, owned and operated by the defendant, contracted with ACS to perform painting, electrical work, and other miscellaneous repairs at ACS-operated early learning and day care centers throughout the City. As part of the multiple contracts with ACS, the defendant was required to submit an itemized list of materials purchased for use in connection with the work performed, as well as supporting documentation, specifically receipts reflecting materials purchased. During the term of the contracts, the defendant received approximately \$95,270 from ACS. DOI’s investigation found that, from 2016 and 2017, the defendant submitted falsified invoices for payment to ACS that included receipts from a fictitious business and receipts from two actual businesses that were falsified.

DOI Commissioner Strauber thanked the Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg and his staff for the prosecution of this matter, which was handled by Assistant District Attorney Jessica Olive of the Financial Frauds Bureau and her supervisors Bureau Chief Kofi Sansculotte and Deputy Bureau Chief Ryan Gee. DOI Commissioner Strauber also thanked ACS Commissioner Jess Dannhauser and his staff for their cooperation on this investigation.

At DOI, the investigation was conducted by Deputy Inspector General Harlyn Griffenberg, under the supervision of Senior Inspector General Laura Millendorf, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel G. Cort.

*DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country and New York City’s corruption watchdog. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City. DOI’s strategy attacks corruption comprehensively through systemic investigations that lead to high-impact arrests, preventive internal controls and operational reforms that improve the way the City runs.*

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