



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**DOI STATEMENT ON GUILTY PLEA OF MAN CHARGED WITH BRIBING A
DOI INVESTIGATOR POSING AS A "CLERK" FOR THE CITY ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL BOARD ("ECB")**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced that a DOI undercover operation has culminated in CELESTINO ORTA's pleading guilty today to a felony bribery charge. ORTA's plea to a violation of 18 U.S.C. 666 - Bribery Concerning Programs Receiving Federal Funds - took place in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York. ORTA, 38, of the Bronx, is expected to be sentenced in July.

DOI conducted an undercover investigation in June and July 2007 after an Administrative Law Judge with the City's Environmental Control Board ("ECB") told DOI that an individual appearing before her had offered her Yankee tickets in exchange for resolving an ECB summons on a Brooklyn building. That individual, ORTA, was arrested in July 2007.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "Today's guilty plea demonstrates that those who seek to subvert the City's administrative hearings by paying off City officials will be held accountable. This individual now stands convicted of an audacious bribery scheme that was brought to light by the administrative law judge who properly reported the offer to DOI."

ORTA engaged in a scheme in which he acted as a middle-man between a company with ECB fines of more than \$33,000 and a supposedly corrupt ECB clerk who would falsify ECB's records to indicate that those fines had been cleared. In fact, both the company's "representative" and the "ECB clerk" were DOI undercover investigators. ORTA brokered a deal where the company's "representative" paid ORTA \$15,000 once ORTA proved that the company's ECB fines were cleared. ORTA then split that money with the "ECB clerk." The New York City Department of Environmental Protection ("DEP") and the ECB cooperated and assisted DOI in its undercover investigation.

The ECB is an administrative tribunal that hears cases involving violations of New York City's quality-of-life laws. The DEP pays for the ECB's operations and those who work for ECB are DEP employees.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for DEP, including Confidential Investigators Zeola Fox and Max Adler, under the direction of Inspector General Michael Carroll and Deputy Inspector General Michael Healy.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd for her and her staff's assistance and cooperation on this investigation.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel Brownell of the Eastern District of New York prosecuted the case.

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To report someone ripping off the City, call DOI at (212) 825-5959.