

News Release

LOBBYIST ARRESTED-CHARGED WITH GRAND THEFT

Lobbyist Allen Hardemon, who represented a County canal sediment-hauling contractor, was arrested today and charged with fraud and grand theft. Hardemon is 46 years old and is a resident of Miami-Dade County.

According to an affidavit filed by a Special Agent of the Miami-Dade County Office of Inspector General, from October 2002 to the present, Hardemon used his special reputation as a lobbyist in the community to falsely sell African-American citizens of Miami-Dade and Broward Counties supposed business opportunities that involved the ownership of trucks for use on a Dade County canal sediment hauling contract. Hardemon, without any authority whatsoever to sell County business opportunities, fraudulently sold these opportunities to victims through Unity One Group, Inc., a company in which he and Dr. Clyde Pettaway, an employee of the James E. Scott Community Association (JESCA), were directors. The affidavit alleges that Hardemon sold these business opportunities for \$1,500 up front cash, for each truck that each victim committed to owning. Hardemon knew that the persons he sold these opportunities to were not qualified to participate in the hauling contract. Further, Hardemon knew he did not have the power to assign anyone to participate in this contract yet he falsely represented to his victims that he was the sole person authorized to allow haulers to participate in the hauling pool.

The affidavit further alleges that Hardemon, as further inducement, promised his victims that they would each receive, up front from the County, \$900,000 for each truck they acquired, that they would each be allowed to acquire up to five trucks, that they would get new trucks from Mack Truck with no money down, and that each victim would receive \$50,000 from the Small Business Administration (SBA) in working capital.

In all, Hardemon has been charged with one count of fraud and 15 counts of grand theft. If convicted, he faces 90 years imprisonment and \$85,000 in fines. His bond is recommended at \$ 82,500.

Inspector General Christopher Mazzella expressed regret that Hardemon could stoop to such disgraceful conduct to cheat members of the African-American community out of their hard earned money and dash their hopes and dreams for a better life. He was particularly disturbed that Hardemon used his access to County hall to impress his victims into believing that he would deliver on his false promises. Mr.

Mazzella noted that this investigation, which his office is working jointly with the Dade County State Attorneys Office, is continuing.

Media Availability: Copies of the arrest affidavit are available at the Inspector General's Office, 19 West Flagler Street, Suite 220, telephone number 305-375-1946. The Inspector General will be available today between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 pm. to respond to media inquiries.