

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Former Prattsville Town Supervisor Pleads Guilty to Fraud

ALBANY, NEW YORK – Kory O'Hara, age 45, formerly the Town Supervisor of Prattsville, pled guilty today to wire fraud in connection with a grant extended to Prattsville in the wake of Hurricane Irene.

The announcement was made by United States Attorney Carla B. Freedman; New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli; Janeen DiGuseppi, Special Agent in Charge of the Albany Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); John Pias, Special Agent in Charge of the Detroit Field Office, Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector (DHS-OIG); and Christina Scaringi, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Inspector General, Northeast Region (HUD-OIG).

In August 2011, Hurricane Irene caused significant damage to the Town of Prattsville, resulting in the issuance of millions of dollars in rehabilitation grants to Prattsville and its residents. As Town Supervisor, O'Hara entered into various grant agreements, including with the New York State Housing Trust Fund Corporation.

In pleading guilty, O'Hara admitted that between 2013 and 2015, he obtained false invoices from a Prattsville-based modular home business, Moore's Homes, purporting to reflect construction work performed on O'Hara's automotive garage, O'Hara's Service Station, which Moore's Homes did not perform. O'Hara issued checks to Moore's Homes reflecting payment on the invoices, but Moore's Homes returned all of the money.

O'Hara, who was Town Supervisor at the time, then submitted the false invoices and checks to Prattsville and the New York State Housing Trust Fund Corporation to fraudulently obtain \$24,915 in grant proceeds under the New York Main Street Program.

United States Attorney Carla Freedman stated: "The New York Main Street Program was designed to make sure that grant money would be used to rebuild Prattsville in the wake of Hurricane Irene. As Town Supervisor, O'Hara knew the rules, but chose not to follow them. Instead, he took grant money fraudulently. We will continue to hold public officials accountable who, through fraud, put their own interests above those of their constituents."

New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli stated: "Kory O'Hara violated the trust of his community and his duty as Town Supervisor by stealing funds that were meant to help the town recover from Hurricane

Irene. Thanks to my partnership with United States Attorney Carla Freedman and federal law enforcement and agencies, O'Hara has now been held accountable for his fraudulent, selfish actions.”

FBI Special Agent in Charge Janeen DiGuseppi stated: “Hurricane Irene had an absolutely devastating impact on the town of Prattsville, New York. While residents struggled to rebuild their lives, Mr. O'Hara was busy fraudulently obtaining the funds meant to assist them. The FBI, together with our federal, state, and local partners, will continue to aggressively investigate those who exploit the programs designed to alleviate the tremendous loss that follows a natural disaster.”

HUD OIG Special Agent in Charge Christina Scaringi stated: “Prattsville was overwhelmed by Hurricane Irene’s damaging winds and flooding. Mr. O'Hara was entrusted to use federal disaster recovery funds to benefit the residents of Prattsville. Instead, his actions resulted in illicit personal gains and undermined the integrity of American taxpayer-funded relief programs. The HUD OIG will not tolerate this behavior and will continue to work with our partners in the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the State Comptroller’s Office, FBI, and Homeland Security to ensure bad actors are held accountable for their misdeeds.”

O'Hara faces up to 20 years in prison; a term of post-imprisonment supervised release of up to 3 years; and a maximum fine of \$250,000. He will also be required to pay \$24,915 in restitution to the State of New York.

O'Hara’s co-defendant, Stephen Baker, age 71, of Prattsville, previously pled guilty to offering a false instrument for filing, a Class A misdemeanor, in Prattsville Town Court, and the federal charges against him were dismissed.

This case was investigated by the Office of the New York State Comptroller, Division of Investigation; FBI; DHS-OIG; and HUD-OIG, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Cyrus P.W. Rieck.

Topic(s):

Public Corruption

Disaster Fraud

Financial Fraud

Component(s):

USAO - New York, Northern

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