

# CHIEF TEXTED ABOUT TICKETS,

Conversations  
with defendant  
in corruption trial

BY JOHN RILEY

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Floral Park Police Commissioner Stephen McAllister discussed intervening in arrests and repeatedly asked alleged fixer Jeremy Reichberg for help getting items ranging from an emerald pendant to a TV and Billy Joel tickets, according to text messages introduced last week at the NYPD corruption trial in a federal court in Manhattan.

McAllister, an NYPD inspector before becoming Floral Park chief in 2010, is not charged, but prosecutors have alleged he is one of several uncharged police officials who provided favors in return for gifts — including jewelry, meals and travel — from Reichberg and crony Jona Rechnitz, a government witness.

One series of texts from Oct. 28, 2015, involves discussion of McAllister's previously expressed interest in a Breitling or Omega watch and, prosecutors say, Reichberg's effort to have McAllister use his New York police contacts to help with a harassment arrest involving the owner of a Brooklyn carpet business.

Their exchange began at 5:35 p.m. when McAllister wrote, "Who are you looking to get out on Queens?" Reichberg texted the businessman's name, adding, "The floor guy from Brooklyn." McAllister answered, "What kind of floors? Did we make any headway on watch?"

A few minutes later, Reichberg said, "My guy is trying to locate one for a good price, he asked if we can wait for the watch show." McAllister's response: "When is that? OK, guy will make night court and be out tonight. Let's get together soon."

Reichberg and former NYPD Deputy Insp. James Grant have been on trial for nearly eight weeks in the bribery conspiracy trial. Former Deputy Chief Michael Harrington previously pleaded guilty, and the evi-



Floral Park Police Commissioner Stephen McAllister is one of several uncharged police officials in an ongoing NYPD corruption and bribery trial.

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— Joel Weiss, attorney for Floral Park Police Commissioner Stephen McAllister

dence has touched on Reichberg's links to several other police officials, including former NYPD Chief Phil Banks and McAllister.

Star prosecution witness Rechnitz, a real estate investor, has testified he and partner Reichberg, of Borough Park, gave McAllister meals and gifts,

including a diamond ring, a Florida plane trip and a \$25,000 donation to the NYPD football team, in return for help. He tied McAllister to assistance such as a Lincoln Tunnel escort for Rechnitz's visiting boss and NYPD intervention with protesters at a jewelry store, as well as Floral Park chaplaincies

## READ THE TEXTS

McAllister's texts to Reichberg were introduced in court  
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and parking placards.

Despite the allegations, Floral Park officials have supported McAllister, and his \$245,000 annual contract was renewed for two years in April.

McAllister has denounced Rechnitz as a "liar," and his lawyer Joel Weiss said the chief received no free items from Reichberg or Rechnitz and did not act improperly with regard to the carpet business owner.

"As with everything else, Steve

McAllister did nothing wrong," Weiss said Saturday. "The U.S. attorney has been far from shy about bringing charges in this investigation. Appropriately, they have charged Steve with nothing, and that speaks volumes."

Weiss and lawyers for Reichberg and the Brooklyn businessman who had been arrested, named Eddie Sankari, also said he had received no special treatment and all charges against him were eventually dismissed. Sankari's attorney, Bettina Schein, said he had been falsely accused by an ex-employee with an "ax to grind."

In the hundreds of texts sent over two years, McAllister asked for help from Reichberg acquiring items that include the Billy Joel tickets, an Atlantic City visit, tickets to a Luke Bryan concert and a

# GEMS: FEDS

# Carter keeps town job after indictments

BY NICHOLAS SPANGLER  
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Smithtown continues to employ a garbage-collection company indicted in November on state charges of falsely billing the town hundreds of thousands of dollars for garbage picked up from elsewhere on Long Island.

"If we were to stop them from picking up, we'd have to figure out" which other contractors could step in to do the job, Town Supervisor Edward Wehrheim said, adding that town officials are reviewing their carting options and may seek restitution from the company, V. Garofalo Carting, for the alleged false billing.

In 2017 the town paid \$2.1 million to the contractor for garbage pickup at nearly half the town's 37,000 homes. That contract was signed in 2014 and is due to run through 2020.

But the company also picked up a much smaller portion of the town's commercial garbage under contracts with the businesses, state prosecutors allege. The alleged false billing occurred in connection with that work.

Under Smithtown's commercial garbage plan, which prosecutors said appeared to be unique on Long Island, carters pay no tipping fee when they deliver town commercial garbage to the Covanta Huntington Resource Recovery Facility in East Northport. Instead, that cost is included in a waste generation fee the town assesses to each business.

Suffolk County District Attorney Timothy Sini said in an interview his office's investigation showed the company had exploited the plan for almost \$1 million by delivering garbage from outside clients to the Covanta plant under the pretense that it had come from businesses in Smithtown.

Russell Barnett, Smithtown's top solid waste official, said the alleged behavior cost town taxpayers, taking up excess capacity at the plant that could otherwise

## \$2.1M

How much Smithtown paid the contractor last year for garbage pickup at nearly half the town's 37,000 homes.

have been sold to other users.

The company and cousins Mario Garofalo, 60, the firm's president, and Robert Garofalo, 64, a driver, were indicted in Suffolk County Supreme Court Nov. 15 on six felony counts of enterprise corruption, money laundering, conspiracy, grand larceny, falsifying business records and offering a false instrument for filing, along with misdemeanor counts of conspiracy and operating a solid waste facility without a permit. They pleaded not guilty. Robert Garofalo, of Port Washington, was released on recognizance, and Mario Garafalo, of East Northport, was released on \$100,000 bond, according to records.

Robert Macedonio, the Islip Terrace attorney representing the company, said it "will continue to provide the same quality of service they always have while this matter is resolved."

Town spokeswoman Nicole Garguilo said in a text message that town officials had vetted the company before awarding it the 2014 contract and determined that it was "qualified to perform the work."

Barnett said Garafalo "has provided an acceptable level of service on collection work," adding that the town's commercial garbage plan has insulated town businesses from volatile disposal prices and ensured that they have a place to deposit their waste in an era of rapidly dwindling landfill space across Long Island.

Past conduct is only one factor that town officials consider when evaluating bids, she said, along with "our experience with the bidder and past performance for the town. Cost is also a major fac-

tor given that disqualification of a low bidder ultimately results in increased costs to our taxpayers."

Company founder Vincent Garofalo pleaded guilty to attempted criminal possession of stolen property, a felony, in 1984, according to records.

The firm and two Garofalo family members, Mario Garofalo and Ralph Garofalo, were indicted in Suffolk Supreme Court in 1991 in what prosecutors at the time told Newsday was the company's illegal takeover of an 11-acre parcel of Islip's Pilgrim State Hospital property that adjoined its land, dumping debris and medical waste and mining at least \$950,000 worth of sand and gravel there.

In 1993, according to court records, Mario and Ralph Garofalo pleaded guilty to felony charges of grand larceny and criminal mischief in connection with that case.

Smithtown officials said at the time they were concerned about the alleged dumping's proximity to the town border. "We brought it to the DEC's attention . . .," John Valentine, then Smithtown's code enforcement director, told Newsday in 1991. Valentine is now the town's public safety director.

In the mid-1990s, the company was assessed a \$250,000 penalty in connection with the Pilgrim State allegations, according to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Sini and chief investigator John Barry said their case began with a reinvestigation of a 2014 Town of Smithtown complaint. Their investigation used Covanta records, surveillance video and data from a GPS tracking service that Mario Garofalo had installed on his own trucks, they said.

Mario and Robert Garafalo face up to 25 years in prison and the company could be closed if prosecutors win convictions on all counts, Sini said. His office has already seized some of the company's equipment and has also moved against its bank accounts and real estate, Sini said.



CHARLES ECKERT

Jeremy Reichberg, seen after his 2016 arraignment, and former NYPD Deputy Insp. James Grant are on trial in the bribery conspiracy case.

Super Bowl visit — he texted an expletive when told that couldn't happen — as well as an engagement ring for a friend, emerald earrings or a pendant for his wife, and a watch and TV.

Some of the texts indicate McAllister is just seeking Reichberg's help getting a good price, and they don't say he got any of the items for free. Weiss said he didn't.

Prosecutors last week also called NYPD Det. Iballys Starling, whose Oct. 28, 2015, arrest of Sankari triggered the texts between Reichberg and McAllister. The detective said Sankari was charged with aggravated harassment based on a complaint from an ex-employee in a dispute with him.

"Mr. Sankari was threatening to kill his family, including his newborn baby," she testified.

Starling said that when she brought Sankari back to her station house, she got a call from her commanding officer asking if she could issue a Desk Appearance Ticket, which would result in quick release, instead of full arrest processing that could require him to go to court and delay his release.

"He said he was getting phone calls about this guy," she recalled. "He said he was getting calls from other chiefs." She told her commander, falsely, that she already had put Sankari into the system for full

arrest processing, which would be hard to reverse, to try to preempt "pressure."

"I was afraid for my victim's safety because of the allegations that were made," she testified, despite the fact that it "annoyed" her boss.

According to the texts between McAllister and Reichberg, Sankari came up again on Dec. 16, 2015, a few hours after McAllister texted Reichberg to ask if he could get a 60-inch Smart LED TV for less than \$1,000, and Reichberg promised to check around.

"Who is this guy we are trying to get out?" McAllister texted. "He was arrested for the same thing not to [sic] long ago. Maybe he needs night in jail."

Reichberg assured the Floral Park chief that Sankari was "not a bad guy" and was facing false allegations. McAllister texted, "Okay we will get him out but he owes you big. Need new carpet for Summer house. Lol."

A few minutes later, McAllister texted, "He's court ready. She will call over." Reichberg responded "Thx!!!" and McAllister texted, "Tell him I need to view samples wall to wall. . . . Upstairs hall and 3 bedrooms maybe 1000 sf not alot."

Weiss said McAllister never received free carpet from anyone.

The government is expected to rest its case when the trial resumes on Monday.