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## Essex District Attorney's Office Jonathan Blodgett

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## Lawrence City Officials Indicted on Conspiracy, Extortion and Other Charges

An Essex County Grand Jury today returned 5 indictments each against former Mayoral Chief of Staff Leonard Degnan of North Andover and Deputy Chief of Lawrence Police Melix Bonilla of Lawrence.

"These indictments are the result of a lengthy and continuing investigation conducted by the Essex District Attorney's Office with assistance from the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General, and the Massachusetts State Police" said District Attorney Jonathan Blodgett. "The crimes alleged by these indictments represent a serious breach of the public trust."

The indictments against Degnan include Solicitation of a Bribe with Corrupt Intent, Knowing Solicitation of a Bribe, Unlawful Use of Official Position, Conspiracy, Extortion or Attempted Extortion. These indictments allege that on divers dates between December 1, 2009 and March 31, 2010, Degnan used his position as Chief of Staff for Mayor William Lantigua to compel an executive manager of Allied Waste, a trash disposal contractor with the City of Lawrence, to donate a trash truck to a city or town located in the Dominican Republic.

The indictments against Bonilla include Trick, Scheme or Device to Mislead in the Procurement of Supplies, Fraudulent Conversion of City Property, Unlawful Use of Official Position, Conspiracy, and Extortion or Attempted Extortion. These indictments allege that on divers dates between March 1, 2010 and September 30, 2010, Bonilla, acting in his position as Deputy Chief of Police, fraudulently transferred ownership of 13 motor vehicles that belonged to the Lawrence Police Department to an automotive sales agency with a close affiliation to Mayor William Lantigua. Further, he used his position as Deputy Chief of Police to compel another to complete the fraudulent transfer of ownership against his will and in a way that misled the Chief of Police and the people of Lawrence.

Indictments are allegations only and Degnan and Bonilla enjoy the presumption of innocence until proven guilty.

Degnan and Bonilla will be arraigned in Salem Superior Court on Wednesday, September 12, 2012. Essex Assistant District Attorneys Michael Patten and Michael Sheehan will prosecute the case.

This investigation is ongoing and therefore no further information will be released.

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