

Mayor Jacob Frey could be called to testify in upcoming Feeding Our Future trial

Frey could be called to testify about former aide Abdi Nur Salah, who is accused in the upcoming federal fraud trial set to begin in February.

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<https://www.startribune.com/frey-witness-list-feeding-our-future-trial/601207452>

Mayor Jacob Frey is included on a long list of people who could be called to testify in the second Feeding Our Future trial scheduled to begin in February.

That's because Frey's former senior policy aide, Abdi Nur Salah, is among the four people set to go on trial as part of a massive federal child nutrition fraud case that revolved around a nonprofit called Feeding Our Future. The second trial in the massive pandemic fraud case is set to begin Feb. 3. Federal prosecutors say a large network of nonprofits bilked the federal government out of more than \$250 million meant to feed hungry children during the pandemic.

Frey is listed among 175 people on the prosecutors' witness list because he could be called to testify about Salah's work at the city, the city's outside employment policy and other ethics regulations. Frey is not charged in the case and hasn't been accused of being involved in the fraud. His spokesperson Ally Peters said Frey hasn't been subpoenaed to testify.

"Mayor Frey respects the judicial process and has no new information on this specific case," she said. "The broad scheme laid out by prosecutors is reprehensible and those responsible must be held accountable."

The others set to go on trial alongside Salah are Feeding Our Future founder Aimee Bock, Salah's brother Abdulkadir Nur Salah and Salim Ahmed Said.

Abdulkadir Nur Salah co-owned Safari Restaurant, which prosecutors say fraudulently received over \$16 million in federal funds in 2020 and 2021.

Prosecutors say Abdi Salah and the former chair of the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, Sharmarke Issa, used federal pandemic funds to buy a \$390,000 four-unit apartment complex in south Minneapolis. Issa was appointed by Frey to chair the housing authority in 2019.

Abdi Salah was fired and Issa resigned after the federal investigation broke open with a massive FBI raid in January 2022. [Issa pleaded guilty in September to wire fraud and money laundering](#), defrauding the government of \$7.6 million. Issa claimed to serve 2.3 million meals to children at his food sites.

Internal city records show Abdi Salah and Bock tried to use their influence with the city to thwart state efforts to stop the alleged fraud. [Bock emailed Salah a proposed council resolution questioning the state's commitment to minority children and business owners.](#)

Abdi Salah sent the resolution to Council Member Jamal Osman, who offered to introduce it at a council meeting, but his aide convinced him to wait until after a meeting with the state. The resolution was never introduced.

Several emails between Osman and Abdi Salah are listed among prosecutors' list of exhibits, which they'll try to get admitted as evidence, for the trial.

A half dozen people were charged with using a nonprofit incorporated by Osman to fraudulently participate in the food program. Just days after Osman took his name off incorporation documents for a nonprofit called Stigma-Free International, it was used to open sites allegedly used to distribute free food to children all over the state, from Willmar to Mankato. Prosecutors say the nonprofit was reimbursed over \$10 million, which was diverted for personal use.

Osman has not been charged with any wrongdoing.

The prosecutors' trial brief accuses Abdi Salah of trying to use his political connections to thwart the Minnesota Department of Education, which ran the federal food program.

"When MDE began scrutinizing Feeding Our Future and sites under its sponsorship, Abdi Nur Salah used his political influence to lobby politicians to pressure MDE not to shut down Feeding Our Future and sites under its sponsorship so that he and his co-conspirators could continue to carry out their fraudulent scheme," the brief says.

So far, 70 people have been criminally charged with defrauding the child nutrition program; 28 have been convicted, three are fugitives outside of the U.S., and one defendant died.