

Name: Alert ID: TMML202403469851 ATLANTA - Mitzi Bickers has been arraigned on 11 federal charges including conspiring to commit bribery, wire fraud, money-laundering, federal obstruction and tax fraud. Bickers was indicted by a federal grand jury on March 27, 2018. "City of Atlanta contracts always should go to the most qualified bidder through a contracting process that is fair and transparent," said U.S. Attorney Byung J. "BJay" Pak. "Instead, Mitzi Bickers allegedly conspired to use her influence as a high-ranking City of Atlanta official and later as a connected political consultant to steer lucrative city contracts to Elvin R. Mitchell, Jr., Charles P. Richards, Jr., and their companies through bribery. The illicit arrangement netted over \$2 million in bribes for Bickers and almost \$17 million in city contracts for Mitchell and Richards, and has shaken the public's trust in the city's contracting process." "The actions of Bickers, alleged in this indictment, traded the public's trust in a fair bidding process for personal gain," said David J. LeValley, Special Agent in Charge of FBI Atlanta. "The FBI and its partners in law enforcement will not tolerate those who choose to try to influence established and proper government procedures." "Public officials need to be reminded of the trust and duty bestowed upon them by the taxpayers to serve the public's interest not their own," said Thomas J. Holloman, Special Agent in Charge, IRS-Criminal Investigation. "When public officials and those seeking to do business with them break this trust by committing fraud, they will be charged to the fullest extent of the law." According to U.S. Attorney Pak, the charges, and other information presented in court: As the City of Atlanta's Director of Human Services and after leaving employment with the city, Bickers allegedly conspired with contractors Elvin R. Mitchell, Jr. and Charles P. Richards, Jr. to accept bribe payments for herself and other public officials in exchange for the her agreement to obtain city contracts for Mitchell's and Richards' companies. Both Mitchell and Richards have pleaded guilty to paying bribes to Bickers and are currently serving federal prison sentences for their crimes. In 2009, Bickers worked on the mayoral campaign and began working for the City of Atlanta after the election. From February 2010 to May 22, 2013, Bickers served as the City of Atlanta's Director of Human Services. Beginning in 2010, Mitchell and Richards agreed to pay bribes to Bickers to secure profitable City of Atlanta contracts for their businesses. At times, the bribe payments allegedly were referred to as "up-front money." In reality, Mitchell and Richards often paid Bickers when their companies actually received City of Atlanta contract work. In exchange for the bribe payments, Bickers promised to represent Mitchell, Richards and their companies on matters relating to City of Atlanta contracting, even though she was a high-level city employee at the time. Bickers also allegedly provided Mitchell and Richards with sensitive contracting information during the critical time when they were bidding on city contracts. Between 2010 and 2013, Mitchell's and Richards' companies received multi-million dollar contracts with the city for snow removal, sidewalk repair and maintenance, and bridge reconstruction. In effort to conceal her relationship with Mitchell and Richards, Bickers allegedly filed numerous false City of Atlanta Financial Disclosure Forms. For example, in 2011, Bickers swore under penalty of perjury that she had no financial relationships with any outside businesses, even though Mitchell's and Richards' companies paid her over \$650,000 in that year. She used much of this money to purchase a \$775,000 lakefront home in Jonesboro, Georgia, making a down payment of over a half million dollars. In that same year, Bickers also allegedly claimed on her taxes that she made only \$57,896 as a city employee, resulting in a \$3,924 tax refund from the IRS. In 2013, Bickers' financial ties to the Pirouette Companies came to light and Bickers resigned her position with the City of Atlanta. After her resignation, Bickers, Mitchell, and Richards allegedly continued the bribery scheme. For example, Bickers helped Mitchell secure a multi-million dollar contract for snow and debris removal work after a snowstorm locked down Atlanta in 2014. In turn, Mitchell paid Bickers and companies associated with her hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes. Bickers spent the proceeds of the bribery at stores like Gucci and on expensive vacations, home renovations, four Yamaha WaveRunners, a sports utility vehicle and an ATV. Bickers is also charged with money laundering for purchasing an SUV and four WaveRunners with bribery proceeds from an account held by the Bickers Group, which was her political consulting company. Ultimately, between 2010 and 2015, Mitchell and Richards allegedly paid Bickers and companies associated with her over \$2 million in an attempt get City of Atlanta contracts through bribery. In this same period, the City of Atlanta paid Mitchell's and Richards' businesses approximately \$17 million for the government contracts they secured. In September 2015, Mitchell began cooperating with FBI's investigation into corruption at City Hall. On September 11, 2015 at

approximately 5:30 a.m., Shandarrick Barnes threw a concrete block reading "ER, keep your mouth shut!" through a plate glass window in Mitchell's home. Bickers is alleged to have played a role in this attempt to obstruct the federal investigation. Barnes will be sentenced by District Court Judge Steven C. Jones on April 9, 2018. Mitzi Bickers, 51, of Atlanta, Georgia, was arraigned today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Russell G. Vineyard. Members of the public are reminded that the indictment only contains charges. The defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government's burden to prove the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial. This case is being investigated by the FBI and Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation. First Assistant U.S. Attorney Kurt R. Erskine and Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeffrey W. Davis are prosecuting the case. For further information please contact the U.S. Attorney's Public Affairs Office at USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov or (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndga>.