



# NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General  
**Catherine Leahy Scott**

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## **FORMER DEC PROJECT MANAGER CHARGED WITH GRAND LARCENY FOR RUNNING ELABORATE CONTRACTOR FRAUD SCHEME**

ALBANY – New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott and Attorney General Eric Schneiderman today announced the felony indictment of a former Department of Environmental Conservation (“DEC”) project manager on charges he operated an elaborate contractor fraud scheme while employed by the State.

David Comenale, 51, of Comenale Ct., New York Mills, was arraigned in Oneida County Court today on two counts of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, felonies.

The two year investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott found Comenale used his position as DEC project manager, who oversaw various projects across the State, to implement a complex scheme to secure and dispense funds purportedly meant for a construction project on Staten Island by siphoning the money into shell companies he controlled. He ran the scheme in 2013 by borrowing \$62,500 from an asbestos abatement company he routinely worked with, Midlantic Environmental, Inc. Comenale asserted the borrowed funding was meant to pay for electrical work at the Cardinal O’Connor Lighthouse on Staten Island and that Midlantic would be reimbursed by the State through another contractor routinely used for DEC projects. Ultimately, \$21,000 of the money leant went to electrical work at the job site and much of the rest was siphoned through several companies controlled or owned by Comenale, and was never used for a DEC project.

The Inspector General’s investigation also found that in 2014 Comenale used another contractor he routinely worked with for DEC projects to steal approximately \$26,000 through a fraudulent loan scheme involving Adirondack Bank. The contractor took out the loan and immediately turned over the loan proceeds to Comenale through a separate company Comenale controlled.

“This defendant used his position overseeing projects for the State to conjure a series of elaborate and complex financial frauds, ultimately enriching himself and violating the trust of the public he was supposed to be serving,” said **Inspector General Leahy Scott**. “I will relentlessly pursue anyone who uses their public position and authority for fraudulent self-entitlement.”

“Government employees must not use their positions as trusted public servants to take advantage of companies,” said **Attorney General Schneiderman**. “My office is committed to exposing corruption at all levels of government, so that companies can work closely with the state without fear of fraud.”

In the wake of the investigation, Comenale was terminated by the DEC earlier this year.

The defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in a court of law.

Comenale is due back in Oneida County Court July 20.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked the State Police for their assistance with processing Comenale's arrest, Oneida County District Attorney Scott D. McNamara and his office for their assistance with the investigation and Attorney General Schneiderman and his office for investigating and prosecuting this matter.

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