



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Nov. 28, 2016
Contact [John Milgrim](#): 518-474-1010

FORMER DEC PROJECT MANAGER SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR ELABORATE CONTRACTOR FRAUD SCHEME

ALBANY – New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott, Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and Oneida County District Attorney Scott D. McNamara today announced that a former New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (“DEC”) project manager was sentenced to two-to-six years in prison for bank loan fraud and for operating an elaborate contractor fraud scheme while employed by the State.

David Comenale, 51, of Comenale Ct., New York Mills, was sentenced in Oneida County Court today for his August guilty plea to two counts of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, felonies. The plea and sentencing stems from intermingled contractor fraud and bank loan schemes he perpetrated. Comenale also previously pleaded guilty to one count of Forgery in the Second Degree, also a felony, in relation to a bank loan fraud case for which he was previously indicted by the Oneida County District Attorney following a separate investigation.

A 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 disperse 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 former State worker used his position to conceive and finance complex criminal contracting and loan schemes enabling the thefts of tens of thousands of dollars,” said **Inspector General Leahy Scott**. “I will continue to use my office and my partnerships in law enforcement to pursue anyone who uses their public position for criminal self-entitlement.”

“Government employees who abuse their power for financial gain take more than just money – they chip away at the public’s faith in government,” said **Attorney General Schneiderman**. “This sentence reinforces our commitment to rooting out governmental corruption and ensuring that those responsible pay the price.”

"This case is a perfect example of how the Attorney General, Inspector General and the Oneida County District Attorney's Office work together to pursue justice on behalf of the victims of fraud and financial crimes in

Oneida County and the State of New York," said **District Attorney McNamara**, who thanked Attorney General Schneiderman, Inspector General Leahy Scott and their offices for the hard work and collaboration with his own economic crime unit on this investigation.

In the wake of the investigations, Comenale's employment with the DEC was terminated earlier this year.

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

#