

Councilman Panico Announces Recycling Letter Scammers Complete Plea Deal

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Farmingville, NY – Councilman Dan Panico has announced that two individuals who were responsible for a recycling scam in Brookhaven Town have completed a plea in the Eastern District of the United States Attorney's Office. The successful outcome of the case was a result of a cooperative effort by the United States Federal Postal Inspector, Brookhaven Town officials and Town Law Investigators.

In May of 2017, a Brookhaven Town resident reported to Councilman Panico that they received a letter from a company called Real Community Matters, claiming they were in violation of recycling codes and demanded payment of a fine ranging from \$50 to \$1000. The Councilman advised the resident that the letter was fraudulent and that they should not respond. The Town warned residents about the scam through the press, Town website, Facebook, Twitter, Cablevision Channel 18 and by Constant Contact e-mail. Brookhaven Town Law investigators quickly traced the fake letters to a postal box at a UPS Store on Nesconset Highway in Stony Brook. They turned the information over to United States Postal Inspectors, who traced the owners of the box to a Coram couple. Under questioning, the man and woman admitted their role in sending the letter, and Postal Inspectors brought the case to the United States Attorney.

The man and woman have signed a Voluntary Discontinuance with the U.S. Attorney, and must report to a federal probation officer for the next six months. If they commit another crime or otherwise violate the conditions of their release, the charges of Federal Mail Fraud will be reinstated. While some victims did send money in response to the letter, the quick action of Councilman Panico and Town investigators in notifying the public about the scam allowed many to cancel the checks they had sent before they were cashed.

Congressman Lee Zeldin said, "Thanks to the vigilance of Brookhaven residents, the swift action of United States Postal Inspectors, and the leadership of Councilman Panico, those attempting to defraud our community have been identified and will be brought to justice. The quick and successful resolution of this incident will help restore confidence in the safety of our communities. This incident serves as a reminder to all Long Islanders to always remain alert."

Supervisor Romaine said, "I commend the resident who brought this fraudulent letter to our attention. Their vigilance helped direct out Law Investigators to find those responsible for this crime. I urge anyone who believes that they might be the victim of a scam like this to immediately call the police and don't ever send money or provide any personal information."

Councilman Panico said, "Upon receiving notification of this fraudulent letter we immediately went to work with our internal law investigators, whom are former Suffolk County Detectives and the Federal Postal Inspector. While I am pleased that no one was defrauded of any monies, residents should remain vigilant of new scams and attempts to defraud the public. While in this case swift action was able to bring those responsible to justice, I encourage residents to contact my office and the police if they receive any phones calls or correspondence, written or electronic, that attempts to collect monies or personally identifiable information that doesn't seem right. As a community we must remain vigilant."

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