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James R. Rosendall Jr.

GRAND RAPIDS -- An Alpine Township man at the center of an investigation into alleged Detroit City Hall corruption was working for a company that holds a \$3 million sludge-hauling contract with the city of Grand Rapids, as well as contracts with other West Michigan communities.

However, Grand Rapids city officials say they don't expect the Detroit case, which involves local developer James Rosendall Jr., to have an impact on their contract.

"It's of interest to us," said Grand Rapids Assistant Director of Environmental Services Mike Lunn. "I don't see how it would impact us at all."

Rosendall, 43, a Forest Hills Northern graduate, well-known developer in parts of Kent County and owner of the most expensive home in Alpine Township, was identified in published reports as the Synagro Technologies Inc. vice president who cooperated with the FBI by making a videotaped payment to the top aide of the Detroit City Council president.

Houston-based Synagro, which turns sewage sludge into marketable products, has worked across West Michigan -- from Grand Rapids, to Coopersville to Cedar Springs and Ada Township.

The undercover payment was part of a sting related to a multimillion-dollar waste contract awarded to Synagro late last year by the Detroit City Council, according to reports. Rosendall was one of two men who lobbied the city for the contract.

A Detroit newspaper quoted a person familiar with the case saying Rosendall could face charges for acts allegedly committed before he started cooperating.

John Clark, the top aide for Detroit City Council President Ken Cockrel Jr., has resigned after being caught on video taking \$4,000 in cash, according to published reports. Cockrel has said he is not a target of the investigation.

Rosendall, who was suspended by Synagro, issued a statement Tuesday through a Grand Rapids attorney defending the contract with Detroit.

"As far as the federal investigation goes, I made a mistake; I did business with the city of Detroit," he said in the statement. "I am fully cooperating with the FBI."



Press Photos/Ken KolkerJames

Rosendall's home near Four Mile Road and Peach Ridge Avenue NW in Alpine Township is for sale for \$1.5 million. It is Alpine Township's most expensive home.

Rosendall, in charge of marketing for Synagro, tried several years ago to develop the former Klein Rodeo grounds in Sparta, has worked on a development in Rockford and built a high-priced neighborhood, Somerset Meadows, near Peach Ridge Avenue NW and Four Mile Road in Alpine Township.

He owns a \$1.5 million, six-bedroom home in the neighborhood. He took out a permit to build the home in June 2006 and recently put it up for sale.

Rosendall also owns a \$1.42 million home and beachfront property on Lake Michigan -- on North Shore Drive just north of the Grand Haven pier and lighthouse, Ottawa County records show. Records show he bought that home in July 2002.

"I'm shocked," Lakeshore neighbor Barb Cutler said after learning about the investigation. "He just doesn't seem like the type of person."

Cutler said Rosendall and his wife, Carol, renovated the home. The couple spent many summer weekends there, often hosting friends and neighbors, although she hasn't seen them lately.

"He's a super, super nice guy. Very, very pleasant. Very, very easy to talk to," Cutler said. "He and his wife are very down-to-earth."

In Grand Rapids, Synagro has a \$3 million contract to "de-water" sludge from the city's wastewater treatment plant and truck it to landfills -- a job it's held since 1998.

"It's been re-bid and they've been the low bidder," said Lunn, the assistant environmental services director.

Lunn said he rarely deals with Rosendall.

"He was more of a marketing guy," he said. "He'd come to meetings once in a while."

Synagro's office at 2751 Alpine Ave. NW, near Three Mile Road, is vacant.



James Rosendall developed the Somerset Meadows neighborhood at Peach Ridge Avenue and Four Mile Road NW in Alpine Township, where his \$1.5 million home is located.



The former Synagro Technologies Inc. office at 2751 Alpine Ave. NW in Walker is now vacant.

Alpine Township officials say they got to know Rosendall well as he worked to develop Somerset Meadows.

"He followed all of our rules and regulations," Township Clerk Jean Wahlfield said. "He was just another person coming into the office."

In early 2000, Rosendall, acting as a developer, tried to buy the 121-acre former site of the Klein Rodeo -- southwest of M-37 and 13 Mile Road NW -- in Sparta. At the time, he said he wanted to put a combination of residential, industrial and commercial there.

The real-estate agent who represented Rosendall on the deal, Mike O'Hara, declined to comment.

"I know Jim, but I don't know anything about his dealings in Detroit," O'Hara said. "This is the first I've heard of it."

In 2006, Coopersville awarded low bidder, Synagro, a \$193,900 contract to remove sludge from the city's wastewater treatment plant. City Manager Steven Patrick said he just learned about Rosendall's involvement in the FBI probe when he received a call from a Detroit Free Press reporter.

Patrick said he could not recall even meeting Rosendall, but said the company "came in on time and on budget."

"Synagro did a good job," he said. "They came in and did exactly what they were supposed to do and when it was done, they left."

In 2002, the Holland Board of Public Works got only one bid, from Synagro, for a three-year contract to haul away and dispose of liquid biosolids left after treatment. The contract paid \$400,000 to \$600,000 a year.

On Tuesday, Holland BPW Operations Director Dave Koster said through spokeswoman Andree Keneau that the company's contract ended Monday, but a new one was being drafted through attorneys.

The city didn't deal directly with Rosendall and "we've never had any issues with the work they've done with us," Keneau said.

-- Press reporter Kyla King contributed to this story.

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