

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
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Department of Justice

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Northern District of Ohio

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Strongsville Real Estate Agent Sentenced To 10 Years In Prison For Mortgage Fraud Involving Medina Properties

A Strongsville real estate agent was sentenced to more than 10 years in prison for his role in a \$3.3 million mortgage fraud scheme involving six properties in Medina, Ohio, said Steven M. Dettelbach, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio.

Thomas G. France, 44, was sentenced to 125 months in prison and ordered to pay more than \$3 million in restitution. He was previously found guilty of conspiracy and bank fraud.

Joseph Beccia, age 63, of Richfield, was sentenced to two years in prison and ordered to pay more than \$3 million in restitution.

Alex Blackmore, age 50, of Bronx, New York, was sentenced to a year in prison and ordered to pay \$1.1 million in restitution.

Beccia and his company, Horizon Construction, built six luxury properties in Medina in 2006 and 2007. Although some of the properties were not fully completed, Beccia listed five of the six properties for sale at purchase prices that were equal to the true market value of each property.

Beccia incurred the cost of the construction of these homes without having known purchasers for these properties. Beccia was not able to sell these properties for an extended period of time and began to experience financial difficulties. Joseph Jones, an individual previously convicted in another mortgage fraud scheme, met Beccia through France, a real estate agent working in the area. France advised Beccia that Jones had a system by which Jones could sell these properties so that Beccia could pay off his debts on the properties, according to court documents.

Jones and France explained to Beccia that Jones had individuals willing to have properties purchased in their names. Jones and France also advised Beccia that in order to make Jones' system work, the properties would need to be removed from the market and re-listed at significantly higher purchase prices. Finally, Jones and France advised Beccia that they would handle the interactions with the loan officers and securing the mortgage loans. All Beccia had to do was participate in the sale of the properties at the significantly inflated purchase prices and sign off on the loan documents as the seller, which Beccia agreed to do, according to the court documents.

Beccia advised Jones and France the amount of money he required from the sale of each the properties in order for him to repay the amounts he had borrowed to construct the homes. Then, Jones determined the additional amount of money he wanted to receive over and above the amount of money required to be distributed to Beccia after the sale of each property. Beccia and France prepared new purchase agreements for each of the six properties with the inflated purchase price necessary to satisfy the amounts of money required, according to the indictment.

France re-listed five of the six Medina properties for sale at the inflated purchase prices determined by Beccia as follows: 2940 Sutton Lane from \$599,000 to \$950,000; 4281 Fox Glen Drive from \$395,000 to \$647,000; 4320 Perian Court from \$399,000 to \$650,000; 3006 Sutton Lane from \$529,500 to \$920,000; and 4740 Lake Forest Trail from \$925,000 to \$1.4 million, according to court documents.

Each of the properties for which defendants secured a mortgage loan went into foreclosure, resulting in a total loss of approximately \$3.3 million, according to court documents.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Mark S. Bennett, following an investigation by the Cleveland Offices of the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the United States Secret Service.

Component(s):

USAO - Ohio, Northern

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