

Councilwoman guilty of taking bribe for sludge vote

June 29 -- Detroit City Councilwoman Monica Conyers has pleaded guilty in federal court to accepting a bribe for her favorable vote on a \$1.2 billion Synagro Technologies Inc. sewage sludge disposal contract.

Conyers, who serves as City Council president pro tem, faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine for her June 26 guilty plea in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, according to U.S. Attorney Terrence Berg. The court did not set a date for sentencing.

By a 5-4 vote, Detroit City Council approved Synagro's \$1.2 billion sewage sludge disposal contract in November 2007. Conyers was the swing vote and accepted \$6,000 in bribes from a former Synagro official.

On Jan. 27, the City Council voted 7-1 to terminate the contract after James R. Rosendall Jr., a former Synagro vice president, pleaded guilty Jan. 26 to federal bribery charges involving the contract. Among the allegations, Rosendall donated some \$200,000 to nonprofit groups, political action committees and campaign entities associated with a city official. In 2003, he also allegedly chartered a private jet, at a cost of \$18,000-\$20,000, to fly city officials and others to Las Vegas for a boxing match, according to the federal government's complaint.

Detroit's mayor at the time, Kenneth V. Cockrel Jr., and Synagro agreed on Jan. 29, to cancel the \$1.2 billion contract.

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