



KATHERINE FERNANDEZ RUNDLE

STATE ATTORNEY



ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Former Opa-Locka Building & Licenses Employee Charged in Alleged Theft of City Fees

Miami (May 13, 2021) - As a result of a joint investigation by the Miami-Dade Police Department and the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office, former Opa-Locka Building & Licenses Office employee Mary Brown has been charged in the alleged theft of \$266,784.00 in city fees. Brown worked as a Building Clerk in the Building and Licenses Office for approximately 5.5 years and has been charged with one (1) count each of Organized Scheme to Defraud (1st Degree Felony), Grand Theft (1st Degree Felony) and Official Misconduct (3rd Degree Felony).

"Allegations that a former City of Opa-Locka employee would have used her position to blatantly steal from the city is horrendous enough," said State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. "But given all the fiscal difficulties that the City of Opa-Locka has worked hard to overcome, such actions are a betrayal of the residents of the city and of those city workers committed to making Opa-Locka stronger. I commend the Miami-Dade Police Department and my prosecutors for aggressively pursuing this investigation."

Over a 3-year period, beginning in fiscal year 2016 and continuing through fiscal year 2019, Brown allegedly defrauded the City of Opa-Locka by stealing the payments from customers paying cash for business licenses. Brown allegedly organized a scheme to manipulate and circumvent the standard operating procedures established by the City of Opa-Locka by utilizing customer receipts that she deliberately did not inventory or assign in the computer database, as was required. The failure to reference customer receipt numbers in the database limited Opa-Locka's ability to properly reconcile licenses and payments and allegedly allowed Brown to provide customers with the purchased licenses without the city detecting the thefts. The investigation of Brown's cash deposits to her personal bank account for the years 2017, 2018 and 2019 indicated alleged cash deposits of \$116,922 in addition to her total salaried city income of \$106,795 for the same period.

"I am very proud of the thorough investigative skills and teamwork exhibited by my Public Corruption Section and the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office," said Miami-Dade Police Director Alfredo "Freddy" Ramirez III. "Holding an official post in public service comes with great responsibility, and a violation of such is simply not acceptable."

For media availability, please call the Office of the State Attorney at 305-547-0535.

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