

# Department of Justice

United States Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr.  
Western District of New York

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## **CITY OF BUFFALO EMPLOYEE PLEADS GUILTY TO STEALING HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS FROM PARKING METERS**

BUFFALO, N.Y.-- U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that James Bagarozzo, 57, of Buffalo, N.Y., pleaded guilty to stealing \$210,000 from the City of Buffalo, a Governmental agency which receives federal funding. The guilty plea, which occurred before U.S. District Judge Richard J. Arcara, carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison, a fine of \$250,000 or both. The defendant also is required to pay restitution.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Maura K. O'Donnell, who handled the case, stated that the defendant was employed by the City of Buffalo for approximately 30 years. In 2003, Bagarozzo began working as a parking meter mechanic for the City. In that capacity, the defendant was responsible for repairing defective parking meter machines, but was not authorized to collect any money deposited into the machines.

Beginning in July 2003 and continuing through December 2011, instead of making necessary repairs, Bagarozzo intentionally damaged in excess of 75 parking meters. Those efforts made it easier for the defendant to steal quarters inserted into the meters by the public. The defendant stored the stolen quarters in bags in his car or in his pants pockets. Bagarozzo used the money to pay for personal expenses and the expenses of his family members.

The Government's evidence included statements from employees at a local bank where Bagarozzo regularly deposited large quantities of the stolen quarters. Bank tellers stated that the defendant would deposit the quarters in \$500 increments.

In 2011, the City of Buffalo's Department of Parking Enforcement initiated a review of parking meters after suspecting that quarters were being stolen from the meters. Subsequently, video surveillance was conducted which showed that the defendant stole quarters from the meters on a daily basis.

Bagarozzo was arrested in December 2011 along with another employee, Lawrence Charles, who was also employed as a parking meter mechanic. Charles pleaded guilty to a similar charge on September 4, 2012.

"At any level of government, public servants owe a duty of integrity and honesty to the taxpayers they serve," said U.S. Attorney Hochul. "This office will continue to prosecute any who breach that duty."

The arrests are the culmination of an investigation on the part Special Agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Christopher M. Piehota and the Buffalo Police Department, under the direction of Commissioner Daniel Derenda.

Sentencing is scheduled for December 17, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. before Judge Arcara.

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