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‘Wire Sent for Cal’: DOJ Witness Details Bribe, Recordings, and Contract Coaching in Federal Trial

Mon Ethos owner David Whitaker, a cooperating witness, spent over 2 hours on the stand Tues. detailing how the former Sports, Parks & Recreation commissioner allegedly solicited a \$16K bribe, supported by audio, texts, wire transfers, and meeting footage.

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David Whitaker, left, and his attorney at the District Court in St. Thomas on Tuesday, July 22, 2025. By. WTJX

ST. THOMAS — David Whitaker, the central witness in the federal corruption trial of former Department of Sports, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Calvert White and contractor Benjamin Hendricks, took the stand Tuesday, spending more than two hours detailing what the

U.S. government described as a bribery scheme tied to a \$2.1 million bid for security cameras.

Testifying before a jury of 14, Whitaker outlined how he was approached by Commissioner White while installing cameras during the 2023 Crucian Christmas Festival. White, he said, indicated that he wanted to have a conversation. Soon after, according to Whitaker, White instructed him to speak to Hendricks—a directive he followed on December 28, 2023. During their conversation, Hendricks allegedly told Whitaker that \$16,000, or 1% of the contract value, would be needed to ensure Mon Ethos secured the bid.

Unbeknownst to the defendants, Whitaker was a cooperating witness for the federal government. He recorded conversations, shared WhatsApp messages, and wired payments to Hendricks's company, A Clean Environment. One such transfer, on January 3, 2024, was for \$5,000, labeled as a "partial payment for contract," with a follow-up message reading, "Wire sent for Cal." Whitaker said this money was later reimbursed by the U.S. Department of Justice.



Calvert White arriving at the District Court in St. Thomas on Friday, Jan. 10, 2025 (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, V.I. Consortium)

The recordings played in court captured conversations between Whitaker, White, and Hendricks. In one audio clip, Hendricks reportedly confirmed the bribe: "If that's what he wants, that's what he wants," referring to White. He then suggested breaking the payment into smaller installments to avoid suspicion, stating, "Let's break it up in fours."

Another audio recording, made during the Crucian Christmas Festival, caught White asking Whitaker if the cameras were going to be removed after the event. The government used the audio to introduce a timeline of escalating interactions leading to the awarding of the contract. In a video exhibit, the three men were seen leaving a van and approaching a white Jeep in Frederiksted, where White was recorded asking, "Is he willing to give Benji a little something for the meeting?" Whitaker testified that "a little something" meant a \$4,000 payment.

More exhibits followed, including Exhibit 7, a text message reading, "Wire sent for Cal," and Exhibit 11, a phone call in which White reportedly advised Whitaker to visit a FirstBank location in Sunny Isles to complete a wire transfer before it closed. Exhibit 14 included the bank transfer receipt itself. Exhibit 15 showcased White coaching Whitaker about the bid: "We don't need microphones for the cameras. I just need to show the deputy something."

During the evaluation process, White was also allegedly texting Whitaker while simultaneously attending the meeting. According to Exhibit 20, White confirmed that Mon Ethos had been selected. The government introduced further exhibits to show White providing Whitaker with information on competitors' proposals and strategy to undercut them.

On cross-examination, White's attorney Clive Rivers sought to undermine Whitaker's credibility, referencing past convictions for bank and wire fraud, bribery, and multiple schemes, including one [involving former Police Commissioner Ray Martinez](#). Whitaker acknowledged his criminal history and admitted that he was cooperating with the federal government in hopes of a reduced sentence, though he also stated, "I understand that it does not mean I will get a lighter sentence, but I believe I will."

Hendricks's attorney, Darren John Baptiste, remained largely silent during proceedings, following a warning from the judge over a comment he allegedly made, calling for Whitaker to be jailed.

Other witnesses on Tuesday included Corey Romney Jr., a contract specialist formerly with the Department of Property and Procurement, and Malachi Thomas, the current Chief Procurement Officer. Romney confirmed that White had participated in the evaluation committee meetings, citing a Teams call log as evidence. Malachi Thomas testified that he was told to halt final processing of the Mon Ethos contract in May 2024, after having facilitated and drafted the agreement. Exhibits showed White's comments and approvals embedded within the document review process.

Throughout the day, defense attorney Rivers frequently objected, with many objections overruled by the judge, who appeared frustrated at times with the disjointed approach.

One of the final exhibits introduced involved a phone call where Hendricks reportedly told Whitaker, "That's how all the commissioners make a little change."

The trial continues Wednesday at 8:30 a.m., with Whitaker expected to return to the stand. The judge has indicated that the case may conclude by Thursday.