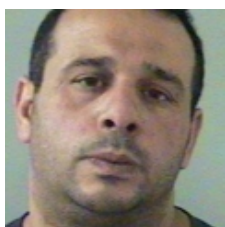


DiMatteo faces federal drug charges; bribery investigation involving Swanson still alive

By Kathryn Reed

Gino DiMatteo, the man accused of bribing South Lake Tahoe City Councilwoman Angela Swanson, is back behind bars. This time he faces federal drug charges.

While the state drug charges have been dropped, the federal charges are more serious if only because of the venue. Plus, the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office in a press release said, "... the investigation into certain South Lake Tahoe city officials as to their dealings with DiMatteo is ongoing."



Gino
DiMatteo

DiMatteo was arrested Nov. 2 in Placerville where he was scheduled to appear in El Dorado County Superior Court on a hearing related to the state charges.

His criminal attorney, Rob Woelfel, told *Lake Tahoe News*, "I'm pleased that all of the California charges have been dropped and it is disappointing that law enforcement is trying to direct this into a federal forum to deny my client a medical

marijuana defense.”

DiMatteo, who used to run the City of Angels II medical marijuana dispensary in South Lake Tahoe, was first arrested Aug. 31 on a slew of drug charges as well as bribing a public official. Now he operates Push Fitness, which Friday night still had its lights on.

In moving the case to U.S. District Court, it raises the seriousness of the allegations against DiMatteo. For one, the feds don't recognize any form of marijuana being legal. This is in direct contrast to the state of California which allows the sale and use of medical marijuana.

The exact charges DiMatteo faces have not been released and the federal complaint is sealed.

Swanson has never been charged or detained. However, she has been questioned and her electronic devices taken as evidence. It has come out that she solicited a donation from DiMatteo for the Lake Tahoe Educational Foundation, on whose board she sits, at the same time she was voting to allow DiMatteo to move his pot club to a different location in town. She maintains her innocence. DiMatteo was known to give quite a bit to charity, so this donation would not have been out of the ordinary. And Swanson's votes have consistently been in favor of medical marijuana, so the time of the donation and vote may look bad, but are not out of character for either individual.

Swanson did not return a phone call Friday.

A twist often not seen in cases like this is in the press release from the district attorney there are quotes from DiMatteo criticizing Long: “I – I really think that Ted Long's only agenda is political. And I think it's his intention to no, you know, not represent me properly and just use my – my – I don't know how to say it. You now, what's happening to me – to advance himself and his own agenda.”

Ted Long was not available for comment. He had been DiMatteo's civil attorney, but had spoken out about the criminal case.