



MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568



718.286.6000
WWW.QUEENSDA.ORG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2020

CONTACT: PRESS (718) 286-6315
QDACommunications@queensda.org

DISBARRED ATTORNEY CHARGED WITH BILKING CASH FROM CLIENTS

*Defendant Allegedly Stole More Than \$150,000 From Victims;
Faces Up to 15 Years in Prison if Convicted*

District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that a disbarred lawyer, who had an office in Fresh Meadows, Queens has been charged with 3 counts of grand larceny. The defendant allegedly stole more than \$150,000 from 3 of his clients from June 2013 through June 2017.

District Attorney Katz said, “The defendant in this case is accused of breaching the trust of his clients and unjustly enriching himself. The victims trusted the defendant to act on their behalf, when they hired him to handle various legal matters. Instead the defendant allegedly pocketed tens of thousands of dollars that should have been distributed to his clients. The defendant now faces serious charges and will be held accountable for these alleged criminal acts.”

District Attorney Katz identified the defendant as Michael Kohn, 70, of Sycamore Drive in Sands Point, Long Island. The defendant was arraigned late yesterday afternoon before Queens Criminal Court Judge Joanne Watters on a complaint charging him with 3 counts of grand larceny in the second degree. The defendant was released on his own recognizance and ordered to return to court on October 27, 2020. If convicted, Kohn faces up to 15 years in prison.

According to the charges, said District Attorney Katz, an investigation which included interviews with clients and detailed forensic review of bank records allegedly showed that the defendant stole funds held in multiple bank accounts that should have been disbursed to his clients. The victims, however, were either left empty-handed or given just a fraction of the funds they were due.

DA Katz said, according to the charges, on August 30, 2016 victim 1 was the executor of an estate and hired Kohn to handle the sale of estate property in Woodside, Queens. The real estate sold for approximately \$868,000 with \$358,000 payable to the executor. The victim received 2 checks in the amount of \$75,000 and another for \$25,000. Bank records allegedly showed that the account which held the funds as of June 30, 2017 had a balance of just \$19,000. The victim never received the remaining proceeds from the estate sale.

Continuing, the DA said, in July 2015, victim 2 hired the defendant to handle a personal injury case. The civil matter was settled for \$90,000. When the victim asked Kohn for the money, he allegedly

told victim 2 that there was a delay due to an outstanding medical bill. That bill totaled about \$4300. The victim allegedly never received a dime of the settlement money even though the funds were deposited in a bank account controlled by the defendant.

Continuing, DA Katz said, according to the charges, victim 3 was an administrator for a deceased relative's estate and hired the defendant to handle the sale of property in Douglaston, Queens. In June of 2013, the property sold for about \$650,000 and the funds were deposited into an account controlled by Kohn. However, the victim only received \$100,000 in proceeds from the sale of the real estate.

The District Attorney noted that Kohn, 70, voluntarily resigned from the bar in January 2019 for disciplinary reasons.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Thomas Kaup, of the District Attorney's Detective Bureau, under the supervision of Chief Investigator Edwin Murphy. Also assisting in the investigation was Accountant Investigator Vivian Tunnicliff, under the supervision of Supervising Accountant Investigator Joseph Plonski.

Assistant District Attorney Karlton Jarrett, of District Attorney's Public Corruption Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys James Liander, Bureau Chief, Khadijah Muhammad-Starling, Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard Brave.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

#

Note to Editor: An e-version of this press release is posted on the QDA website at www.queensda.org.