



BROWARD OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Misconduct by a City of Fort Lauderdale Employee Who Lied to Qualify for and Keep His Position as City Treasurer

Broward Inspector General John W. Scott announced today that the Broward Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has [issued a final report](#) finding that Ash Benzo, a former City of Fort Lauderdale employee, made several materially false statements in city employment applications in his efforts to obtain the position of city treasurer. After obtaining the position, he continued his fraudulent behavior by holding himself out to be the qualified individual he purported to be on paper and, for one year ending in December 2017, the city paid him at least \$118,040 in salary as well as other employment-related payments and benefits.

Among the several falsehoods the OIG uncovered was that Mr. Benzo listed on an application “John Berhan – Founder” as his supervisor at the firm he created, “ASNF Financial” and “ASNF Financial-Government/Municipal Finance.” City management considered this work history to provide him with some of the necessary government finance experience required for the city treasurer position. The OIG investigation determined that archived “bio” web pages at that company’s website included “Jonathan Berhan” as “Co-Founder of ASNF Financial” and contained a photo of him. The OIG’s investigation identified the man in Jonathan Berhan’s photo as someone else. That individual is actually a senior vice president of construction at a residential management company in the greater Chicago, Illinois, area who knows no Jonathan Berhan, Ash Benzo, or ASNF Financial. He was wholly unaware and shocked to learn that ASNF Financial used his image on its website. Between at least April 2013 and October 2016, the website also used the photograph of another man, identified as the Director of Client Services. The OIG determined that the man in this photograph had a different name and died on July 26, 2013.

Mr. Benzo is no longer with the city, as he resigned in lieu of termination. The OIG did not determine that Mr. Benzo profited from his scheme other than to collect salary and benefits to which he was not entitled.

The OIG also found that city management conducted a substandard assessment of Mr. Benzo’s employment history, achievements, and references. Despite the candidate’s significant assertions—such as being involved in the \$350 billion merger of AOL and Time Warner, being instrumental in UPS’s decision to purchase Mail Boxes Etc., and auditing Detroit and other major cities during their bankruptcies—the then Deputy Finance Director did not independently vet Mr. Benzo’s claimed experience and achievements. She made no attempt to verify his employment and consulting work with his purported partner or any third parties. Instead, she relied on Mr. Benzo’s word and the internet website he created to determine that his work history was as he portrayed it.

John W. Scott, *Inspector General*

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