

Miami Parking Authority says emails at center of lawsuit were falsified

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August 09, 2016 07:19 PM

When developer Moishe Mana [filed a lawsuit last year](#) claiming Miami's off-street parking authority had rigged a competition to develop a mixed-use complex on public land downtown, lawyers representing the agency and winning bidder believed they had a trump card.

Mana's North Miami Avenue Realty LLC, they said, waived its ability to sue when the company failed to timely challenge the Miami Parking Authority's May decision to negotiate a development agreement with a different developer. Though Mana said his company never received any official notice of the board's decision, the parking authority had several May 11 emails to the contrary.

Only one problem: The emails were bogus.

In a notice of disclosure filed Monday in circuit court, Christopher Green, an assistant Miami city attorney acknowledged that the parking authority never provided written notification that Grand Station Partners had been picked to develop the property at 240 N. Miami Ave. Green also backed away from the testimony of the parking authority's planning and development director, Rolando Tapanes, who purportedly sent the questionable emails.

"The MPA has just learned that the information it previously relied on about the May 11 emails was false information," Green wrote. "During the course of a forensic examination of computer records last week, it became clear that the purported May 11 emails were not sent on the date represented in the MPA's initial motion."

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Notice of disclosure filed Aug. 8 by city of Miami Attorney

It's unclear exactly what the examination unveiled to prove the city's emails were false. In a December motion to dismiss Mana's case, Miami's attorneys included a copy of a May 11 letter from Tapanes to Mana attorney David Lederman, seeming to give him official notice of the board's decision to negotiate with Grand Station Partners and giving his company one week to file a bid protest under the law. Two May 11 emails from Tapanes to Lederman, one with the letter attached, were also included.

“Rolando Tapanes has submitted his resignation,” Art Noriega, the parking authority’s CEO, said in a statement issued late Tuesday afternoon. “The circumstances surrounding his resignation are related to matters involving pending litigation. Therefore, at this time it is in the best interest of the MPA not to provide further comment.”

Reached Tuesday, Tapanes declined to answer questions, but seemed to deny responsibility.

“Given the fact that really this has nothing to do directly with me, I can speak with the MPA and see what I can and can’t say,” said Tapanes, who did not return a subsequent phone call.

This has nothing to do directly with me

Rolando Tapanes

The parking authority and Grand Station Partners, led by Ricardo Vadia and Oscar Rodriguez, continue to deny that anything was amiss with the competition and defend the case in court. Green argued Monday that the bogus emails were immaterial to the parking authority’s case since Mana acknowledged during a deposition that he learned of Grand Station Partners’ victory in July during a face-to-face meeting with Noriega.

But revelations that the public agency had been relying on apparently falsified records for months were startling, particularly given that Mana’s complaint, filed in November following the parking authority’s approval of Grand Station Partners’ proposed project, accused Noriega of manipulating the competitive solicitation to insure Oscar Rodriguez, his friend, won the contract. The parking authority was also scrutinized last year after agreeing to sell a Coconut Grove parking garage to a developer.

Bruce Fischman, attorney for North Miami Avenue Realty, declined to comment. Attempts to reach Grand Station Partners’ attorney, Paul Schwiep, were unsuccessful. A non-jury trial is scheduled to begin Aug. 29.