

## **Miami Parking Authority official perjured self, fabricated emails, developer says**

By David Smiley

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A Miami Parking Authority official who resigned this month under vague circumstances has been accused of perjuring himself and fabricating emails at the center of a controversial lawsuit with a prominent developer.

According to an internal agency memo released Wednesday to the Miami Herald, Rolando Tapanes, the parking authority's former director of planning and acting director of purchasing, never sent developer Moishe Mana notice last year that the agency had chosen a different partner to build a mixed-use project on authority property downtown. And when Mana contested the parking authority's decision months later, making it likely the lack of official notice would become a technical legal issue in court, Tapanes asked an information technology employee to back-date his emails to cover his tracks.

"He provided information known to be false and allowed information known to be false to be disseminated," Art Noriega, Miami Parking Authority's CEO, wrote in an Aug. 4 memo to file. Tapanes, in a resignation letter submitted that same day, cited "independent actions of my own" as a reason for stepping away.

But just when the parking authority became aware of Tapanes' alleged fabrications and whether Tapanes acted alone are now core issues in Mana's lawsuit against the agency. In a motion for judgment filed late Tuesday, Bruce Fischman, an attorney for Mana's North Miami Avenue Realty LLC, argued that evidence shows parking authority executives were aware of Tapanes' actions for months but said nothing in order to further their case against the developer.

It wasn't until a court-ordered forensic email examination proved the emails had never been sent that the agency disclosed the problem, he wrote.

"The fabrication was by Tapanes. However, he worked for and represented [the parking authority], and it should be charged with his fabrications," Fischman wrote in a motion for judgment asking Judge Michael Hanzman to declare the case in Mana's favor.

Mana alleges that the parking authority rigged the process to favor winning developer Grand Station Partners due to a friendly relationship between Noriega and company principal Oscar Rodriguez.

Attempts to reach Tapanes were unsuccessful, and Fischman declined to comment. But Noriega said Wednesday that he learned about the problem on July 28 when IT employee Robert Torres — who had given notice that he was leaving the parking authority to take another job — came clean. He said he then pushed Tapanes to resign when he acknowledged his actions. The parking authority and developer Grand Station Partners filed disclosures in court on Aug. 8.

“As soon as [Tapanes] got back from vacation I confronted him on it, he admitted to it, and he separated a day later,” Noriega said.

Tapanes’ emails have previously been a central issue in the case since the parking authority, in previous filings, argued that Mana missed his window to file an administrative challenge of the parking authority’s decision to work with Grand Station Partners and therefore neglected to exhaust all his remedies, weakening his lawsuit. The parking authority and winning developer now argue the emails are irrelevant, since they say Mana learned of the agency’s decision that summer during a conversation with Noriega.

“The conduct, while regrettable, had zero bearing on the award to Grand Station,” Paul Schwiep, an attorney for Grand Station Partners, said in a statement. “We look forward to presenting our opposition to Mr. Mana’s latest motion in Court.”