

Whistleblower

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comment on the settlement.

The money from the settlement will be split between Ferrigan and her lawyers. Had she and the city not come to this agreement, a federal jury would have decided the issue.

“Christine Ferrigan took courageous action by blowing the whistle on dangerous water contamination in Delray Beach,” a statement from her attorneys said. “Ms. Ferrigan’s concerns about water contamination were validated by the Florida Department of Health and the Palm Beach County Office of Inspector General, but instead of rewarding her for her commitment to public health, the City of Delray Beach fired her. Today’s settlement is a step towards justice for Ms. Ferrigan, for the citizens of Delray Beach, and for whistleblowers and public health advocates everywhere.”

Ferrigan’s lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court against the city, Moore and utilities director Hassan Hadjimiry shortly after she called out the city for its wastewater contaminating residents’ drinking water. Ferrigan said that led to her being harassed, retaliated against and ultimately fired in January 2022.

The backstory: Delray’s history of water problems

In July 2008, the city had implemented, with the state Department of Health, a reclaimed water program. It stipulated there had to be a person to oversee cross

contamination, but the city never instituted that, Ferrigan told The Post.

When she asked about it, her managers told her that there was a company taking care of it.

Ferrigan, 65, having already been through the situation in Boca Raton for drinking-water safety violations, refused to let the issue go. After searching the state website for the company involved, she found there was none and offered to do it herself.

“As soon as that happened, I started finding discrepancies and violations,” she said.

Per her lawsuit, in November 2018 — approximately 10 years after the institution of the reclaimed water program — residents were filing complaints of drinking water that was smelly, yellow with algae and sandy. Some were even getting sick, as were their pets, the lawsuit stated.

One in particular called because they didn’t feel well and believed it was the drinking water. Ferrigan, sent to do a cross connection, didn’t find one because it was a house farther north contributing to it.

But when she reported the several residents with similar complaints, her supervisor told her they complained about the problem frequently, so it was not a big deal. According to Ferrigan, her managers believed it was ground disruption from work being done in the area.

“I knew that it wasn’t ground disruption,” Ferrigan said. “All the trademarks of reclaimed water were in that.”

Eventually, she stopped being included in reports to regulators from the city. Later on, she realized the city had neglected to include that people were

complaining about getting sick, one of her attorneys told The Post.

In December 2021, the city paid a \$1.8 million fine after Palm Beach County health officials discovered that drinking water in the area had been contaminated by partially-treated reclaimed water. In addition to this fine, the city has spent more than \$1 million on inspections and other ways to address its longstanding water-treatment problems.

A three-year consent order through the Department of Health, which started in December 2021, now requires the city to properly monitor its reclaimed water system.

Ferrigan reported findings to health officials, Inspector General

Ferrigan was told in a 7 a.m. meeting in January 2022 that her position had been eliminated as part of a reorganization. She had been hired for the role in 2017 and had argued there was no fiscal reason for its elimination.

“Christine set an example,” said Ferrigan’s attorney, Ezra Bronstein of Washington, D.C. law firm Mehri & Skalet. “City employees see stuff all the time. ... They’re actually the ones you want to talk.”

The move came after Ferrigan had reported her findings to health officials and the Palm Beach County Inspector General’s Office.

In the case of Boca Raton, where she resides, Ferrigan reported that steps weren’t taken to assure the city’s reclaimed water system didn’t mix with drinking-water supplies. She also reported that water pressure in certain parts of the city was regularly below



Delray Beach reached a settlement to pay \$818,500 to resolve Christine Ferrigan’s whistleblower lawsuit in which she claimed to have been fired for her reports as a wastewater inspector. The city commission approved the deal at a recent meeting.
THOMAS CORDY/PALM BEACH POST

state standards. Boca Raton later reached a settlement with health officials over certain violations, but it didn’t admit wrongdoing.

Ferrigan promised the Department of Health that she’d never work for another government entity again.

“I don’t want to make the general statement that all utilities are like that, because I don’t want to believe that,” Ferrigan said, acknowledging the hard-working people in these departments. “But unless somebody from the inside notifies somebody from the outside, you’ll never know.”

Jasmine Fernández is a journalist covering Delray Beach and Boca Raton at The Palm Beach Post. You can reach her at jfernandez@pbpost.com and follow her on Twitter at [@jasminefernandez](https://twitter.com/@jasminefernandez). Help support our work. Subscribe today.

Teardown

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“The house has fantastic charm, but because of the price point, we think someone will take it down and build a really magnificent masterpiece for Boca Raton,” said Realtor Jon Mann, who is co-listing the home with Jill Hertzberg. “There has never been an opportunity to buy something with this much waterfront and land in the community.”

While a \$52 million knockdown may sound extreme, there is recent precedent.

Home bought for \$110M in Palm Beach demolished

In October, a \$110 million beachfront home built in 2016 was demolished in Palm Beach. Bought by a company linked to cosmetics billionaire William P. Lauder, the 36,000-square-foot mansion had seven bedrooms and French-inspired architecture. It’s now a vacant lot being sold with an adjoining vacant lot for \$200 million.

Jeannine Morris, of the Morris Group at Lang Realty in Boca Raton, said the property at 2499 E. Maya Palm Drive is one of only two southeast facing “point” lots in the community.

Its 437 feet of waterfront is on two sides of the property — east and south — and it’s less than a mile south of the Boca Raton Inlet, which means easier ocean access. On the corner lot to the south of the home is the massive 2.3-acre estate of prolific philanthropist Christine E. Lynn, who is the namesake for multiple health care facilities and university programs.

“So it’s a really rare opportunity,” said Morris about 2499 E. Maya Palm Drive. She agrees that the home built in 1997

is probably a knockdown.

“So many things have changed with technology, finishes and construction,” Morris said.

“If someone is going to pay that price, they will know exactly what they want for the property.”

‘Parker Estate’ designed with favorite vacation spots in mind

The home was built on lots assembled by Glen K. Parker and his wife Sandy in the mid-1990s. Glen Parker is known for revolutionizing financial investment advisory services, using computer generated forecasts in the early 1970s. His company was called the Institute for Econometric Research.

Architect Mitch Kunik designed the curvilinear 10,000-square-foot main house that follows the line of the waterfront. The property includes amenities that resemble elements of the Little Palm Island resort in the Florida Keys and the Little Dix Bay resort in the British Virgin Islands.

The landscaping was designed by Craig Morell, the former horticulturist of the Boca Raton resort and a retired director of the Kampong garden in Miami, which is part of the National Tropical Botanical Garden.

Glen Parker died in September at the age of 85. His family, including son Randy Parker, who founded the email marketing company Constant Contact in 1995, is selling the Boca Raton property through a trust.

If it sells for \$52 million, it would break the current record of \$28 million paid in February for a home at 372 E. Alexander Road, which is also in the Royal Palm Yacht & Country Club.

“\$52 million is a high number, but this is the community and location that could support a number like that,” Morris said.



This Boca mansion is on the market for \$52 million. “We think someone will take it down and build a really magnificent masterpiece for Boca Raton,” said Realtor Jon Mann, who is co-listing the home with Jill Hertzberg. THE JILLS ZEDER GROUP

West Palm Beach a fast-growing spot for millionaires, report says

According to a report this year by Henley & Partners, which tracks wealth migration internationally, New York City had the most millionaire residents in 2022 at 340,000. But three U.S. cities, including Austin, Texas, West Palm Beach and Scottsdale, Arizona, were in the top five for having the fastest-growing number of millionaires between 2012 to 2022.

The report noted that the number of West Palm Beach residents with millionaire status increased 90% during the 10-year time period with 9,400 millionaires last year. That includes 64 people with \$100 million-plus bank accounts and six billionaires.

The two other top-five cities with the fastest millionaire-resident growth was Hangzhou and Shenzhen in China.

Luxury Realtor John Poletto, a broker

associate at One Sotheby’s International in Boca Raton, said Palm Beach County’s southernmost city continues to attract well-heeled buyers leaving the Northeast and California post-pandemic. He is also getting buyers from South America, Chicago, Detroit and Boston.

Warm weather, no state income tax and concerns about crime and homelessness in more urban centers are reasons Poletto hears for why people are moving to Palm Beach County.

“We’ve never sold as many homes to people in California as we have the past two years,” Poletto said. “It’s an exodus.”

Mann said the property on Maya Palm Drive will be marketed internationally as a “once in a lifetime opportunity.”

In addition to more than an acre of land on the Intracoastal, the property also has a 0.4-acre lot across the street. It also has two pools, a deep-water dock and a separate guest house.

Brokered certificates of deposit

FDIC-INSURED PREDICTABLE INCOME

THIS WEEK’S RATES:

3 MONTH CD	6 MONTH CD	9 MONTH CD	12 MONTH CD
4.90%	4.95%	5.00%	5.10%

Annual percentage yields (APYs) as of 04/21/2023. Rates are subject to change and availability. Minimum quantity may apply

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Currently, the FDIC limits the insured amount (including principal and interest) for all deposits held in the same capacity to \$250,000 per depositor, per insured depository institution and \$250,000 for certain retirement accounts. The FDIC has permanently increased insurance coverage to \$250,000 for deposits held in all ownership categories, including single accounts, joint accounts and trust accounts. Therefore, excess holdings may not be insured. IRAs and certain other retirement accounts will maintain the \$250,000 insurance coverage. Funds may not be withdrawn until the maturity date or redemption date. However, the brokered CDs are negotiable, which means that, although not obligated to do so, Raymond James and other broker/dealers presently maintain an active secondary market at current interest rates. Market value will fluctuate and, if the CD is cashed out prior to maturity, the proceeds may be more or less than the original purchase price. Holding CDs until term assures the holder of par value redemption. CDs are redeemable at par upon the death of the beneficial holder. For a detailed overview of these and other risks, refer to the Certificate of Deposit Disclosure Statement at raymondjames.com/liquid.htm. Additional information is also available on the SEC Certificates of Deposit: Tips for Investors website at sec.gov/answers/cds.htm. Raymond James & Associates, Inc. member New York Stock Exchange/SIPC

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YOUR INPUT IS REQUESTED REGARDING THE PROPOSED DREHER PARK BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

TWO SESSIONS WILL BE HELD ON THE FOLLOWING DAYS:

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26TH FROM 6:00PM-7:00PM
CONNISTON MIDDLE SCHOOL
3630 PARKER AVE
WEST PALM BEACH, FL 33405

SATURDAY, MAY 6TH FROM 10:00AM-11:00AM
DON RAMONS RESTAURANT
7101 S. DIXIE HIGHWAY
WEST PALM BEACH, FL 33405



Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County
800 Northpoint Parkway, Suite 204
West Palm Beach, FL 33407