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Feds Rest Tribal Bribe Case After FBI Agent Tells Of Payments

By **Brian Dowling**

Law360, Boston (April 28, 2022, 3:58 PM EDT) -- Boston federal prosecutors rested their case on Thursday in the Mashpee Wampanoag bribery and extortion case after an FBI agent testified that an architect admitted to giving a tribal chairman about \$40,000 in political donations allegedly tied to a casino deal.

During five days of testimony, the government aimed to convince a jury that former Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Chairman Cedric Cromwell pressed architect David DeQuattro for gifts and more than \$50,000 in checks in exchange for protecting the design firm's multimillion-dollar contract with the tribe's casino in Taunton, Massachusetts.

Cromwell and DeQuattro don't dispute the checks and the gifts, which included a weekend stay at a luxury Boston hotel and a Bowflex exercise bike. But the defendants have **long countered** that there's no evidence that the money and gifts were given in exchange for Cromwell not pulling the plug on the tribe's contract with DeQuattro's firm, Robinson Green Beretta.

The government's key witness, DeQuattro's former partner Joseph Beretta, spent two days on the stand but stopped short of spelling out that he knew the checks and gifts were payments to safeguard the contract, as prosecutors had outlined in their **opening statement**.

Beretta, to whom the government granted immunity for false statements he made to federal agents, told the jury he signed off on the checks and reimbursed his associate for what he was told were political contributions.

The jury heard Thursday from FBI Special Agent Lisa Crandall, who ambushed DeQuattro in the parking lot of the Rhode Island architecture firm in July 2020 to interview him about the Cromwell payments. The architect agreed to answer the agent's questions.

Responding to a series of questions from Assistant U.S. Attorney Jared Dolan about what DeQuattro explained about the payments, Crandall said DeQuattro admitted to making about \$40,000 in political donations to Cromwell indirectly through another organization.

"Did you ask Mr. DeQuattro where he was solicited for the money?" Dolan asked.

"He was solicited at a fundraiser on Cape Cod by the water," Crandall responded, adding that DeQuattro couldn't remember who asked him for the donation.

DeQuattro's attorney Martin G. Weinberg pressed Crandall about what she was told after presenting the architect with a check he made out to Cromwell.

"He was essentially telling you — after showing him the check — that it was a political donation to a person he cares for and a person he admires?" Weinberg asked.

Crandall responded: "He expressed that he thought highly of Cedric Cromwell."

After a handful of other witnesses testified briefly, Dolan told the court that the government had

finished making its case.

U.S. District Judge Douglas P. Woodlock told the jury that — after two days off for the parties to argue over jury instructions and other matters — they would return Tuesday for the defense testimony and likely also hear closing arguments and get the case for deliberation.

Late Thursday, DeQuattro filed a request for Judge Woodlock to order him acquitted of the charges, arguing that the government's evidence at trial was insufficient to sustain a conviction.

Cromwell allegedly extorted DeQuattro and accepted the purported bribe payments from 2014 to 2017, while Robinson Green Beretta served as the owner's project manager for the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe's proposed casino in Taunton, Massachusetts. Both men were indicted in November 2020.

DeQuattro sought a **quick trial** to clear his name after publicity surrounding the government's claims cratered business for the firm.

The government is represented by Jared C. Dolan and Christine J. Wichers of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts.

Cromwell is represented by Timothy R. Flaherty.

DeQuattro is represented by Martin G. Weinberg and Maksim Nemtsev of Martin G. Weinberg Law PC.

The case is U.S.A. v. Cedric Cromwell et al., case number 1:20-cr-10271, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

--Additional reporting by Chris Villani. Editing by Dave Trumbore.

Update: This article has been updated with information about DeQuattro's acquittal motion filed later Thursday.