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NEWS RELEASE

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## **Five Former Bell Council Members Plead to Corruption Charges**

Five disgraced former Bell council members already convicted on multiple public corruption charges pleaded no contest today to two counts each of misappropriation of public funds, thereby avoiding a retrial, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Former Mayor Oscar Hernandez, former Vice Mayor Teresa Jacobo and former Council members George Mirabal, Victor Bello and George Cole agreed to the plea offer that could include four years in state prison.

The five, who admitted earning up to \$100,000 annually for serving on boards and commissions that never met or convened for only minutes a year, also agreed to pay restitution to the City of Bell. However, the exact amount of restitution each person must pay has not been determined yet.

Today's pleas mean the five, who were convicted last year of stealing a total of nearly \$1 million, will not face retrial. The five were facing up to eight years each in state prison if they had not taken the plea offer.

Deputy District Attorneys Sean Hassett and Edward Miller with the Public Integrity Division prosecuted the case.

Jurors in March 2013 convicted Hernandez, Jacobo and Mirabal of five counts each, found them not guilty on five counts each and hung on 10 counts each. All 20 counts were misappropriation of public funds.

The same jury convicted Bello of four counts, found him not guilty of four counts and hung on eight counts. Cole was convicted of two counts, found not guilty of two counts and jurors hung on four counts.

Superior Court Judge Kathleen Kennedy scheduled sentencing for the five as follows:

June 11 for Cole; June 24 for Jacobo; June 26 for Hernandez; July 11 for Mirabal; and July 14 for Bello.

On Thursday, Pier' Angela Spaccia, Bell's former assistant chief administrative officer, returns for sentencing before Judge Kennedy. A jury in December convicted her of 11 felony counts, including writing her own employment contracts, taking loans without council approval and creating her own retirement plan.

Robert Rizzo, the city's former administrator who pleaded no contest to 69 felony counts of public corruption, is scheduled to be sentenced to up to 12 years in state prison when he returns April 16.

Rizzo and Spaccia stole more than \$8 million each in unauthorized salaries, pensions and loans.

In all, prosecutors said Rizzo, Spaccia and the council members stole nearly \$11 million from the community of about 35,000.

The case was investigated by the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation.

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**About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office**

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to seeking justice for victims of crime and enhancing public safety. Annually, the [Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#) prosecutes more than 60,000 felonies and 140,000 misdemeanor crimes.