

Ex-mayor of Newark found guilty of corruption

By Glenn Townes

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEWARK (NNPA) — Former Newark Mayor Sharpe James was found guilty on all federal corruption charges recently by a Newark jury. Among other things, the disgraced ex-mayor was convicted of steering city-owned properties to his ex-mistress, Tamika Riley, who was also convicted on all charges—including fraud and tax evasion.

According to courtroom observers, both James and Riley sat stone-faced and expressionless as a jury foreman shouted the word “guilty” more than 20 times to a packed courtroom. The jury deliberated for more than 30 hours during six days after hearing testimony by more than 40 witnesses throughout the nearly six-week trial.

The prosecution’s niche strategy of focusing in on the intimate sexual relationship between the 72-year-old and married James and the single 39-year-old Riley was pivotal in the prosecution’s case. This, along with dozens of witnesses and a mound of evidence were all instrumental in delivering the guilty verdicts. The feds contend that James had an intense sexual affair during the last several years of James’ 20-year tenure as mayor of New Jersey’s largest city. The charge was that the two conspired in facilitating an illicit land scam on nearly a dozen properties in and around the



Former Newark Mayor Sharpe James, a fixture in city politics, was found guilty of federal corruption last week.

city of Newark. Prosecutors said James abused his office and betrayed his constituents by selling the properties to his mistress at bargain-basement prices of less than \$50,000 during their affair. Riley, in turn, resold the properties to legitimate buyers without making the necessary renovations to the properties. She pocketed the profits—nearly \$700,000—some of which she spent or shared with James and failed to properly report the transactions to authorities. She was also accused of repeatedly lying to federal investigators and frequently contradicted herself during the preliminary stages of the investigation.

James and Riley could each receive a federal prison sentence of between seven to eight years when they are sentenced on July 29. Both defendants are free on bail. As of press time, it was un-

clear if James’ lead attorney, Thomas Ashley, or Riley’s attorney, Gerald Krovatin, would appeal the verdicts. Neither James nor Riley commented to reporters as they left the courthouse.

Immediate reaction to the verdicts by some Newark-area residents was uninspired. However, some small business owners said the conviction finally affirms what some people have speculated for years about the once-popular mayor.

“I think a lot of people expected that he would be found guilty,” said Pam, a Newark businesswoman who

refused to give her last name. “It was common knowledge that he was a crook and did a lot of underhanded and illegal things for years when he was in office.”

Bill, another Newark-area entrepreneur, said, “He had a flow chart and determined whether or not you got a city contract by how much money you contributed to his campaign fund and not how well your product or service would benefit the city of Newark.”

James does have his supporters however.

In the August 16, 2007, issue of *The Amsterdam*

News, reader Dennis Crawford wrote, “After a 20 year career as mayor and eight years as councilman, the City of Newark under his leadership has experienced record rebirth in both housing and economic stabilization.”

But James’ legal woes are from over. He faces another trial on charges that he racked up nearly \$60,000 in charges on city-issued credit cards for personal use. He could face additional jail time and fines if convicted on those charges.

Glenn Townes writes for the *Amsterdam News*.

Clinton, Obama in for long, long fight

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WASHINGTON -Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama entered the final phase of an increasingly nasty U.S. presidential fight on Wednesday, and Clinton said her decisive Pennsylvania win showed she had the broad support needed to lead Democrats back to the White House.

Clinton’s victory boosted her depleted bank account and gave new hope to her struggling campaign, but she still faces a daunting task in wiping out Obama’s lead in pledged delegates who will help select the Democratic nominee at the August convention.

She said Obama’s failure to knock her out of the race, despite outspending her in

Pennsylvania more than 2-to-1, cast doubt on his ability to capture the big states Democrats need in November’s election race against Republican John McCain.

“I’ve won the states we have to win — Ohio, now Pennsylvania,” Clinton told CNN. “If you look at the broad base of support that I have accumulated it really is the foundation on which we build our victory come the fall.”

Both candidates immediately looked to the next round of contests on May 6 in North Carolina, where Obama is favored, and Indiana, which is considered a toss-up.

Obama campaign manager David Plouffe said the (See *Obama, Page 4*)

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