



May 29, 2025

East Cleveland Mayor Brandon King Found Guilty of Theft in Office Among Other Charges; Former East Cleveland City Councilman Ernest Smith Also Found Guilty

CLEVELAND - Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley announced that Brandon King, 56, has been found guilty by a jury of Theft in Office, Having an Unlawful Interest in a Public Contract, among additional charges. Former East Cleveland City Councilman Ernest Smith, 49, was also found guilty by a jury.

"Mayor King's conviction was inevitable," said Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley. "The citizens of East Cleveland deserve better than what their municipal government has provided them. I am hopeful, under the new leadership of Mayor Sandra Morgan, that the city is now headed in the right direction."

From January 1, 2019, through October 2, 2024, Brandon King authorized a public contract and payments through the City of East Cleveland to businesses owned by King and his family members. King authorized leasing office space in a building on Euclid Avenue, owned by King Management Group Limited, to the City of East Cleveland's Domestic Violence Department. The lease was for \$14,184.21 annually, paid in quarterly installments.

From March 16, 2019, through February 22, 2022, the City of East Cleveland purchased \$5,813.07 of cleaning supplies from American Merchandising Services. King Management Group Ltd. and American Merchandising Services are owned by Brandon King and his family members.

From January 1, 2018, through March 31, 2022, Brandon King improperly provided a City of East Cleveland vehicle to East Cleveland City Councilman Ernest Smith. King also provided Smith with City of East Cleveland gas cards to purchase vehicle fuel. While Smith had the vehicle, he used two gas cards to purchase \$6,791 of gas at the expense of the City of East Cleveland.

In addition, Brandon King also filed false yearly financial disclosure statements with the Ohio Ethics Commission from the years 2015 through 2017.

The investigation was conducted by the Ohio Auditor of State and the Ohio Ethics Commission.

On May 29, 2025, Brandon King was found guilty by a jury of the following charges:

- **One count of Theft in Office (F4)**
- **Four counts of Having an Unlawful Interest in a Public Contract (F4 x 2, M1 x 2)**
- **Three counts of Representation by Public Official or Employee (M1)**
- **One count of Filing a False Disclosure Statement (M1)**
- **One count of Soliciting Improper Compensation (M1)**



As a result of the conviction, Brandon King will not be reinstated as the mayor of East Cleveland and will be disqualified from public office for seven years from the date of conviction.

On May 29, 2025, Ernest Smith was found guilty by a jury of the following charges:

- **One count of Theft in Office (F4)**
- **Two counts of Theft (F5)**
- **One count of Soliciting Improper Compensation (M1)**
- **One count of Misuse of Credit Cards (M1)**

As a result of the conviction, Ernest Smith will be disqualified from public office for seven years from the date of conviction.

They will be sentenced at the Cuyahoga County Justice Center June 9 at 10:30 a.m.