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Three charged with election fraud in Hamtramck; more shenanigans to be revealed, former candidate says

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Hamtramck City Hall

((File photo))



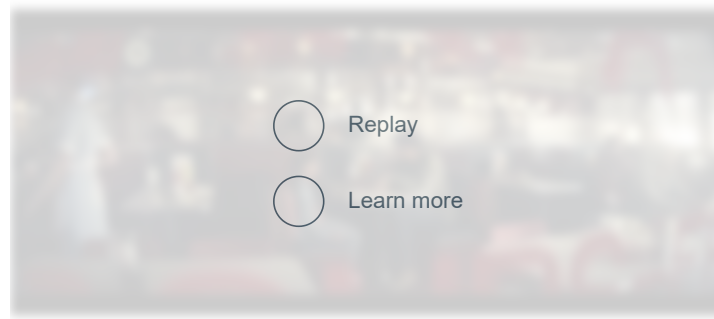
Former Hamtramck Councilwoman Cathie Gordon

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HAMTRAMCK, MI — A complaint by former Hamtramck Councilwoman Cathie Gordon may have helped expose election fraud in Hamtramck's August primary.

Gordon, who placed fourth among four primary candidates running for mayor with 12 percent of the vote, says that might not be the last of it.

The findings come weeks after Gov. Rick Snyder appointed Cathy Square the city's new emergency manager tasked with elevating the city of near 22,000 toward fiscal stability.



State Attorney General Bill Schuette on Wednesday charged three Hamtramck men with a total of 41 counts among them of improper possession or return of an absentee ballot.

Armani Asad, a City Council candidate himself who supported Gordon in her campaign and still has one of her signs on his front porch, is charged with 14 counts; Salim Ahmed, 50, with 21 counts; and Russell Mohammed, 32, with six counts.

Each of the crimes is a felony that carries up to five years in prison.

Gordon, 66, said there were nearly 50 absentee ballots submitted and rejected by City Clerk Marie Kendzierski, who retired a month before the election. She filed her complaint after Kendzierski's replacement, August Gitschlag, reversed the decision and recorded the votes.

It's unclear if the votes that concerned Gordon are the same ones found to be fraudulent.

"During the August 2013 primary election, the Hamtramck City Deputy Clerk, August Gitschlag, found that three unauthorized people had allegedly delivered multiple absentee ballots in violation of state election law," Schuette's office said in a statement. "It is a felony to possess or return an absentee ballot unless you are the person voting, the voter's family member, a mail carrier, or an authorized official. All Michigan absentee ballots clearly explain the codified election law regarding the proper procedure for obtaining, possessing, and processing absentee ballots."

Gordon said she was "taken aback," to learn that Asad, a "nice young man" whom she supported, was involved in delivery of the illegal absentee ballots.

Gordon has another complaint that she jointly filed with City Council candidate Darla Swift. It's potentially more troubling because it's an accusation against a currently elected official, who she says tried to manipulate the vote.

He offered her nearly 200 votes, "but you have to donate some money here," she said was the proposed deal.

Gordon said she was approached by a group of men, one who currently holds office. Because the complaint is under investigation by Schuette's office, Gordon declined to reveal his name.

According to statements Swift made [to the Hamtramck Review \(see story\)](#), Councilman Mohammed Hassan offered her 26 votes in exchange for her support of him in the African-American community.

Swift, who placed third among five candidates vying for two City Council slots, fell short of her goal by 26 votes.

"Preserving the integrity of the voting process is vital to maintaining the foundation of our free democracy," Schuette said. "On election day, voters cast their ballot to make sure their voice is heard. We will not tolerate election law violations."

Gordon, although she won't hold elected office when the primary election concludes in November, says she'll remain a political activist.

"I want to maintain the integrity of my city," she said Wednesday. "No side-stepping the law.

"Follow the law; if not, get out of this town."

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