

# CONTRACTOR: 'ALL A

## \$103K in purchases never may have made it to Riverdale marina

### THE PURCHASES

Orland Park contractor Jessie Williams signed off on several Home Depot purchases he claimed were for redeveloping the Riverdale marina. These include:

- A Jan. 4 purchase of 14 boxes of siding totalling \$1,333.92 shipped to 219 S. 14th Ave., Maywood
- A Jan. 14 purchase of a \$189 three-in-one flooring nailer and stapler, and a \$18.97 double sided soft face hammer
- A Jan. 23 purchase of a \$235 36-inch-by-80-inch medium oak seven-panel brass center arch fiberglass door
- A Jan. 24 purchase of a \$99 Bootz Industries Aloha five-foot bath tub
- A Jan. 26 purchase of a \$599 self-cleaning freestanding gas oven and a \$1,000 refrigerator shipped to 14733 Seeley Ave., Harvey
- A Jan. 26 purchase of two 60-inch vanity ashburn mahogany vanity cabinets totalling \$1,362
- A Feb. 9 purchase of a \$299 clothes washer, a \$299 clothes dryer, a \$399 electric stove, and a \$547 refrigerator
- A Feb. 13 purchase of a \$1.48 bottle of soda pop, a \$7.47 flat cut all paint brush
- A Feb. 13 purchase of three Vitamin Water drinks at \$1.64 each.
- A Feb. 13 purchase of a \$275 rotary hammer
- A Feb. 13 purchase of a \$399 electric range oven, a \$299 electric dryer, a \$547 freezer and refrigerator, five copper double kitchen sinks at \$499 each, four polished chrome faucets at \$389 each, and four 75 gallon water heaters at \$845 each
- A Feb. 14 purchase of a \$208 40-gallon water heater
- A Feb. 14 purchase of a \$189 flooring nailer and stapler, a \$18.97 double sided soft face hammer
- A Feb. 15 purchase of a \$399 drop-in bathtub with therapeutic massage jets
- A Feb. 22 purchase of a \$549 gas range stove, a \$547 refrigerator shipped to 16 E. 137th St., Riverdale
- A March 5 purchase of two toilets totalling \$126.84 shipped to 13737 Illinois St., Riverdale

BY CASEY TONER

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Restoring the blighted Riverdale marina, the jewel of the Little Calumet River, would take leadership, a multimillion-dollar investment and scores of talented, trustworthy contractors.

So the marina's managing partner — a felon who wore a wire in the federal inquiry into Tony Rezko — hired construction companies owned by Jessie Williams, an Orland Park felon who has been sued successfully for fraud and was once convicted of dealing drugs.

A SouthtownStar analysis of records shows that more than \$13,000 in Home Depot merchandise that Williams claimed was for the marina was shipped to houses in Maywood, Harvey and Riverdale. It's uncertain whether those purchases made it to the marina.

The goods included power tools, a bathtub with massage jets, residential gas and electric stoves, refrigerators, a washer and dryer and several water heaters. In one case, more than \$1,000 in appliances were shipped to a Riverdale rental home owned by Williams' brother, Lonnell Williams, who's also a felon.

But that's not all. Thousands of dollars worth of appliances were shipped this winter to a house where Lonnell Williams lives.

All told, purchases from Home Depot and Menards and payments to Jessie Williams and his companies account for about half of the \$647,000 in charges that a village-ordered review of the marina company's books have called into question.

"It was all a big mistake," Jessie Williams said before declining further comment.

The SouthtownStar reported last month that village officials gave \$900,000 in taxpayer funds to Nosmo Kings, the company that owns the marina and promised to redevelop it. The money was paid out of a special taxing district used to restore blighted property.

Saying that the money was not properly accounted for, the village tapped an accounting firm — Mulcahy, Pauritsch, Salvador and Co. — to review the company's books. The report was presented to the village board in closed session during Tuesday's board meeting.

The report found that Nosmo Kings sub-



Boat slips stand at the Riverdale marina. | JOSEPH P. MEIER-SUN-TIMES MEDIA

mitted about \$1.8 million in project-related expenses — about \$1.2 million short of what the company had agreed to spend on the marina to receive any taxpayer money at all.

About \$647,000 of the submitted expenses were ineligible for reimbursement, lacked supporting documentation or were not specifically associated with the project, the report found. These included about \$103,000 in Menards and the Home Depot bills and \$246,000 in payments to Jessie Williams and his two companies, the report shows.

Attached to the report was a letter Nosmo Kings' attorney Theodore Netzky wrote, offering a deal to the village. In lieu of a lawsuit, Riverdale could record a \$900,000 mortgage against the property.

The debt would be erased if Nosmo Kings paid the village \$300,000 in four months or \$450,000 by the year's end, Netzky wrote. Otherwise Nosmo Kings would have to pay Riverdale all of the money within three years. It would be an incentive for the marina's managing partner, John Thomas, to sell the property, Netzky wrote.

Village attorney Mark Sterk suggested that the village should get the mortgage on the property first and seek a greater and quicker payoff. With or without a lawsuit, Sterk couldn't guarantee whether Riverdale would get its money back.

"This was supposed to be an opportunity," Riverdale Trustee Tanya Watkins

said about the project. "And it turned out to be a mess."

John Thomas, the marina's managing partner, wrote in an email to the SouthtownStar that he hired Jessie Williams' company, among others, following the recommendation of Riverdale Mayor Deyon Dean.

"The mayor referred us to several qualified African American contractors, and I selected Orland Park Construction and their affiliates," Thomas wrote.

Dean shrugged off Thomas' claims.

"Whatever companies went out there, that was on him," Dean said.

But records show the village paid companies belonging to the Williamses more than \$300,000 in 2011 for painting, landscaping, construction and demolition work.

Dean signed many of the invoices, including a May 2011 bill from Orland Park Construction for demolition of three homes that lists \$14,900 in asbestos removal charges. A Cook County grant paid for the bill.

An Illinois Environmental Protection Agency spokeswoman said her organization was not notified of the removal as required by federal law. Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan has a lawsuit pending against Jessie Williams and others for improperly removing asbestos during the demolition of Harvey's Dixie Square Mall in 2005.

Despite his legal woes, two of Jessie Williams' businesses were tapped to work at the marina — SouthTown Construction in Harvey and Orland Park Construction.