

## North Miami's Sidewalk-Gate

by [Stephanie Kienzle](#)

October 7, 2012



As I reported in [North Miami Flush Fund](#), the city just paid over \$99,000.00 to a company called IMECO, Inc. to clean three blocks of sidewalks. Yes. They did. Strange, but true.

At its Regular Board Meeting on Tuesday, September 11, 2012, according to Item 4 of the [Agenda](#), the North Miami Community Redevelopment Agency approved a "contract to clean and seal the Downtown Brick Paver Sidewalk area." If you scroll down the Agenda to page 73, you will see a bid from IMECO, Inc., on its letterhead, to perform this job for a grand total of \$99,449.70. This letter is signed by Faustin Denis Jr., PE, as its General Manager.

(Keep the name "Faustin Denis Jr." in mind.)

### **Support Your Local Businesses**

Coming up on this Tuesday night's [Agenda](#), the North Miami Council is considering a "Proposed Resolution approving the selection of Imeco, Inc., as contractor for the Pioneer Boulevard Streetscape Improvement Project, in accordance with the City of North Miami Invitation for BID#47-11-12, Pioneer Blvd. (NE 137th Street) streetscape improvement, at a cost not to exceed two hundred seventy thousand nine hundred eighty dollars and sixty cents (\$270,980.60), and authorizing the City Manager and City Attorney to negotiate and execute an agreement with Imeco, Inc., in substantially the attached form, to accomplish the stated improvements."

According to [supporting documents](#), five other vendors submitted proposals, but "IMECO, Inc. a local North Miami vendor, is the successful respondent and was able to win the bid by using the City's Local Preference Points."

According to page 37 of the supporting documents, Local Preference Certification, paragraphs 1 and 2 require that a company have "a valid business license issued by the City of North Miami at least one year prior to bid or proposal submission" AND it "has a physical business address located within the limits of the City of North Miami."

Only one problem. IMECO is not a "local North Miami vendor." According to its [Articles of Incorporation](#) filed on July 6, 2011 with the Florida Secretary of State, IMECO, Inc.'s principal address is 20030 East Oakmont Drive, Hialeah, Florida 33015. Its President and Director is John J. Denis, and its Registered Agent is Tapanes & Associates, P.A., which changed its name to [Tapanes Law, P.A.](#) on September 24, 2012, the President of which is Edward Tapanes.

(Keep the name "Edward Tapanes" in mind.)

According to the Florida Department of Business Regulation, [License No. CGC1520406](#) was issued on March 15, 2012 to John James Denis, d/b/a IMECO, Inc., as a General Contract, and reflects a main address is 15108 SW 54 Street, Miramar, Florida 33027, with a License Location of 4987 North University Drive, Suite 2406, Lauderhill, Florida 33313.

Neither Miramar nor Lauderhill is located in North Miami. I'm just saying.

## Virtual Reality

However, the address on IMECO, Inc.'s North Miami Business License states that it's located at 12550 Biscayne Boulevard, Suite 800, North Miami, Florida 33181.

Licensee Name	License No.	Issue Date	Expiration Date
IMECO, INC.	CGC1520406	03/15/2012	03/15/2017

  

Field	Value
Licensee Name	IMECO, INC.
Business Name	IMECO, INC.
Business Type	GENERAL CONTRACT
Address	12550 BISCAYNE BLVD SUITE 800 NORTH MIAMI, FL 33181

  

Field	Value
Licensee Name	IMECO, INC.
Business Name	IMECO, INC.
Business Type	GENERAL CONTRACT
Address	12550 BISCAYNE BLVD SUITE 800 NORTH MIAMI, FL 33181

Click to enlarge

Here's the thing. This address is merely a "[Virtual Office](#)," or in essence, a glorified post office box, which anyone can rent for ninety bucks a month. IMECO, Inc. is clearly not operating out of North Miami, even though it received the winning bid under the guise of being a "local North Miami business." If you'd like to find out a bit more about virtual office scams, check out this article entitled (GASP!), [Virtual Office Scams](#). I'm just saying.

On top of that, the North Miami Business License was issued on May 16, 2012, which is NOT "at least one year prior to bid or proposal submission," according to the City's own rules for "Local Business Certification." HAH!

As an aside, and equally as interesting, the City Attorney, Regine Monestime, once used this Virtual Office address, in Suite 800, when she was re-appointed as the North Miami Special Magistrate on [January 10, 2012](#). Coincidence? Methinks not!

Now for the real dirt! (Yes, there's more!)

### **The Three Racketeers**

Even though records show that John J. Denis is the President and Director of IMECO, Inc., remember that Faustin Denis Jr. signed the bid offer as the General Manager. He is somehow obviously related to John J.

An interesting blog published on November 26, 2009 entitled, [Miamuh: details, what are they good for?](#), mentions that "the owner of a construction company is arrested because he allegedly bribed Opa-Locka commissioners to receive government contracts." It also mentions that a Faustin Denis and Dante Starks had been arrested, and also provides a link to an [Eye On Miami blog](#) stating that "Commissioner Terrence Pinder as one person receiving the bribes from Dante Starks."

Folks, if you're a regular reader of this blog, I've already wrote about Terence Pinder's woes back in May of 2011 when his father, Tom Pinder, ran unsuccessfully for North Miami Beach Council. Dante Starks showed up on my radar when I reported in [New Queen On The Block](#) that he worked on Barbara Watson's campaign for State House this past election. Apparently, the two are well acquainted.

Apparently, Faustin Denis is a buddy of theirs, too. In fact, they are so close, they get to stand trial this Friday, October 12, 2012 together on Felony Racketeering charges before Judge Lisa S. Walsh. You can access their court records [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Guess who their defense attorney is? That's right. Edward Tapanes, Esq. He sure gets around!

## Epilogue

In summary, it seems to me that the North Miami City Council would do well to table this item until a thorough investigation can be made into IMECO, Inc., and perhaps find out if anyone inside City Hall has ties to the company. I'm just saying.

An interesting take Sidewalk-Gate was posted by a reader on my column, *North Miami Flush Fund*, before I even finished writing this one, which I will cite in its entirety. Primitive1 wrote:

*"This is an interesting story because it's viewed from a context narrower than the situation itself.*

*In the CRA Agenda file there are various proposals made from different contractors. The first thing that comes to mind is rate scamming.*

*There is more than one proposal for the project, the company that won obviously had the lowest proposal.*

*How is it that a firm run by someone arrested two years ago for attempting to bribe commissioners had the lowest bid of them all? Coincidence? How did the other companies even find out about the option to bid.*

*This is always the most crucial step of bid-rigging. If a job costs 40k, a business insider can essentially pay off his competitors to propose such high markups that his slightly lower high mark up is the best bid.*

*The other two proposals (there are only three which is an annoying and pathetic kind of legal standard) are itemized, submitted by pricing professionals with no statement made. The winning bid by Imeco is not itemized, and instead is a letter.*

*But the context of the situation is really why this was put for proposal to begin with. If of the whole street only a few blocks are problematic why not clean those rather than the entire street?*

*If one wanted to be sure nothing suspicious was going on a few things should be discovered. First how did any of these companies find out about the bid, was it a fair and open process, or was it manipulated to favor a certain proposal. Who won the bid and what if any validity was their to his 2009 arrest, or any previous arrests related to fraud.*

*One final thing I noticed just now looking a few more times at similarities and differences in the three proposals. Imeco is proposing their services in square ft, and the other companies in square yards.*

*So if his proposal is accurate he'll take about as much money as the competitors for 10% of the work."*

He's just saying.

Stephanie Kienzle

"Spreading the Wealth"