

DiMatteo enters guilty plea to federal pot charges

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Gino DiMatteo, 43, of South Lake Tahoe pleaded guilty today to possession with the intent to distribute marijuana.

A bail review hearing is scheduled for this afternoon at 2. Sentencing is set for April 17 before U.S. District Judge Kimberly J. Mueller. While the maximum penalty is 30 years in federal prison, a plea agreement calls for five years.

“As part of his plea agreement, DiMatteo specifically admitted that he possessed the marijuana seized from his residence on Aug. 31, 2012, with intent to distribute it to others,” the U.S. Attorney’s Office said Jan. 9 in a press release.

DiMatteo was arrested in August on state charges that were eventually dropped when federal charges were levied against him. While he had owned the medical marijuana dispensary City of Angels II in South Lake Tahoe, it’s the marijuana found at his residence that led to the arrest.

Detectives said they found a hidden door that led to several rooms under the structure. Court documents reveal that the rooms were used to grow marijuana. Five pounds of processed marijuana and 15 pounds of marijuana residue used for cooking edibles were confiscated. Finished marijuana products like ice cream, granola bars and pizzas were found in a freezer in DiMatteo’s detached garage, according to authorities.

The press release further states, “Within a desk inside the kitchen area, as well as inside a desk in the living room area of DiMatteo’s residence, detectives found pay/owe sheets. In particular, DiMatteo had notes setting the price of the marijuana sold at a South Lake Tahoe marijuana dispensary

known as City of Angels II. On a separate set of documents, DiMatteo listed the various amounts paid. DiMatteo lists himself receiving \$7,000 biweekly.”

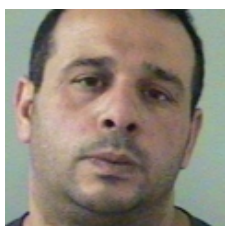
By Kathryn Reed

Gino DiMatteo is going to prison.

“He is going to plead guilty tomorrow morning,” his attorney Don Heller told *Lake Tahoe News* on Tuesday.

The former owner of City of Angels II medical marijuana dispensary in South Lake Tahoe will be in court Jan. 9 in Sacramento where he is expected to admit to marijuana trafficking.

The South Lake Tahoe resident had been indicted in November on three federal charges – conspiracy to manufacture and possess with intent to distribute marijuana; possession with intent to distribute marijuana; and manufacture marijuana. Had the case gone to trial and DiMatteo were convicted on all three charges, he could have faced 60 years to life in prison and fines of more than \$30 million.



Gino
DiMatteo

Instead, in a plea agreement with the U.S. Attorney’s Office, DiMatteo will be in federal prison for five years.

The judge on Wednesday will set a sentencing date. At sentencing is when the other charges would be dropped.

Heller would not talk more about his client or the case. This means it is not known what happens to DiMatteo's business – Push Fitness in South Lake Tahoe – or his house.

The U.S. Attorney's Office earlier told *Lake Tahoe News* if DiMatteo were convicted of at least one of the offenses, he would have to give up all his property deemed to have been associated with or bought by money from drug transactions.

DiMatteo was arrested in August by El Dorado County investigators. Those charges were all dropped simultaneously as the federal charges were leveled against him. However, not everyone caught in law enforcement's web has been exonerated.

In August, DiMatteo was accused of bribing a public official. El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson fingered South Lake Tahoe City Councilwoman Angela Swanson as that official. However, no charges have been filed against her. *LTN* again tried to reach Pierson; again with no call back.

A Nov. 2 press release from Pierson's office says, "... the investigation into certain South Lake Tahoe City officials as to their dealings with DiMatteo is ongoing."

Swanson told *Lake Tahoe News* neither she nor her attorney has had contact with Pierson since August. She added that Pierson doesn't return her attorney's calls either.