



Inspector General Insights

Background: On June 17, 2021, the Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller's (Clerk's) Recording and Records Management office notified the Office of Inspector General (OIG) that they received applications for an inordinate number (20) of *Home Solicitation Sales Permit* applications from an unknown vendor. Further, they stated an applicant had presented an expired green card.

Objective: Our review was to determine if all the applications included the required information and fully complied with the Florida Statute (Fla. Stat.) §501.22 requirements. Further, we wanted to see if there was any evidence of fraudulent activities, waste, abuse or misconduct by the vendor, their business affiliates, or applicants.

Observations: The OIG conducted a preliminary review and found the following:

- The company has been an active Florida Limited Liability Company (LLC) since 2019, with a registered principal and mailing address in Winter Park, FL. The registered manager had an address in Utah.
- Our research did not reveal information or evidence of fraudulent activities, waste, abuse, or misconduct relating to the company, the local point of contact, or the out-of-state owner.
- The Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) records confirmed the company maintains a current and active *Certified General Contractor* license expiring in 2022.
- The Better Business Bureau (BBB) website records revealed the company has been a BBB Accredited business since January 2021, and they received an "A-" rating from the BBB. The BBB customer reviews showed a rating of 4.48 out of a 5.0 scale, and two customer complaints were closed in the last 12 months.
- An Internet search revealed that the Cape Coral Police Department (CCPD) had issued a "Scam Alert" for the company on June 1, 2021. The OIG discussed the matter with the CCPD, who advised us that their investigation concluded that the company was legitimate.
- Internet records further revealed this company frequently advertises job postings for the position of *Summer Sales Representative (Canvasser)* via ZipRecruiter and Indeed. The job postings appeared to seek mainly college students, and the ads stated the target income rate of between \$70,000 - \$120,000 annually.

An OIG examination of the *Home Solicitation Sales Permit* applications revealed the applicants were mainly out of state college students (Utah, Texas, Nevada, Virginia, New Mexico, and Colorado) in the 18 to 33 age group. The review revealed:

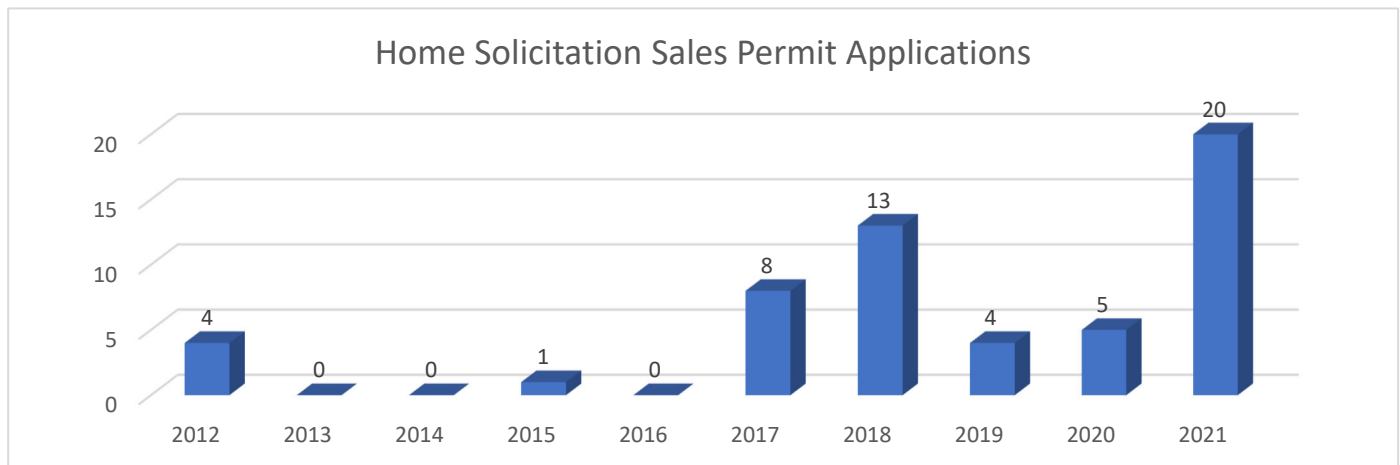
- Seven applicants provided the same local residence address of a single-family house located in Cape Coral, FL

- Six applicants provided the same local residence address of a single-family home located in Fort Myers, FL
- Six applicants provided the same local address of an apartment complex located in Fort Myers, FL, and
- One applicant provided the local address of a single-family home located in Naples, FL.

The OIG did not find additional information to confirm the connection, if any, between the applicants and the registered homeowners of these residences.

The application records showed a Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) criminal background check was performed on 19 of the 20 applicants by the Naples Police Department. All 19 background records indicated that there were no Florida Criminal History records identified, nor did the records reveal grounds for denial of a home solicitation sale permit. The company withdrew one application when they decided not to proceed with hiring the applicant. The OIG did not find evidence or information relating to an applicant with an expired green card.

An inspection of the number of applications processed by the Clerk’s Recording Department during the period of 2012 through 2021 revealed the following results, indicating that the volume from this single vendor was irregular.



Conclusion: Based upon the information obtained and reviewed, the OIG determined all the applications included the required information and fully complied with the Florida Statute (Fla. Stat.) §501.22 requirements. The OIG did not find information or evidence of fraudulent activities, waste, abuse or misconduct by the company, their business affiliates, or applicants. The OIG closed the preliminary review, and no further action is warranted.

Total # Transactions	Amounts Audited or Reviewed	Questioned Costs	Taxpayer Savings	Description
20	\$1,425.00	N/A	N/A	Amount of Application Fees Paid