

Department of Investigation Opens Inquiry into a Key Adams Aide, Winnie Greco

City Hall asked the department to act after THE CITY reported accounts that Greco tried to benefit improperly from her role as the mayor's powerful Director of Asian Affairs.

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NOV. 30, 2023, 4:46 P.M.



Winnie Greco speaks at a Gracie Mansion Lunar New Year celebration, Feb. 8, 2022. Credit: Michael Appleton/Mayoral Photography Office

The city's Department of Investigation has opened an inquiry into Mayor Eric Adams' Director of Asian Affairs, Winnie Greco, following [reporting](#) by THE CITY on allegations that Greco tried to benefit improperly from her government position.

Greco was hired as a senior advisor to the mayor in January 2022 at a salary of \$100,000. Over the years, as a volunteer "ambassador" to the Chinese community and unpaid campaign fundraiser while he served as Brooklyn Borough President, she grew so close to Adams that his top aides now refer to her as family.

DOI spokesperson Diane Struzzi said the inquiry into Greco is based on a referral from the mayor's office, but neither Struzzi nor a City Hall spokesperson would identify the specific conduct under review.



Mayor Eric Adams marches alongside Asian community liaison Winnie Greco in the 21st Autumn Moon Festival and 12th China Day Festival on Sunday, Oct. 1, 2023. Credit: Violet Mendelsund/Mayoral Photography Office

"We've received the referral and we are reviewing the matter," said Struzzi, a spokesperson for DOI Commissioner Jocelyn Strauber.

The inquiry adds to the scrutiny of Adams and a number of his top associates, including a chief fundraiser for his 2021 mayoral campaign, Brianna Suggs, whose home was raided by the FBI in

early November as part of [a federal probe that](#) includes looking at whether the campaign received illegal donations from Turkish nationals at the behest of Turkey's government.

At a press conference Tuesday, Adams said Suggs had been removed from fundraising activities for his 2025 campaign and assigned to other duties.

Another longtime Adams associate, Rana Abbasova, was [placed on leave](#) as a staffer in the Mayor's Office of International Affairs after she allegedly encouraged colleagues to delete text messages hours after the FBI raided her home, according to the New York Daily News.

Abbasova previously served as a volunteer "ambassador" to Turkey and other Eastern European countries for Adams when he was Brooklyn Borough President.

No charges have been filed against anyone in the ongoing federal investigation.

The actions taken on Suggs and Abbasova, in addition to the referral of questions pertaining to Greco to DOI, stand in stark contrast to the expressions of support Adams has offered to numerous allies and friends in and out of the administration accused of [wrongdoing](#) or [incompetence](#).

The request for a DOI inquiry on Greco, even if required statutorily, is particularly striking given the mayor's long relationship with her and her power as a prodigious fundraiser for him in the Chinese-American community.

The moves involving Greco, Suggs and Abbasova came after FBI agents seized the mayor's cell phones and other electronic devices in early November, and after Adams [retained](#) outside legal counsel.



Mayor Eric Adams poses with advisor Winnie Greco at the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival at Meadow Lake in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Aug. 12, 2023. Credit: Caroline Rubinstein-Willis/Mayoral Photography

Allegations about Greco emerged in mid-November when [THE CITY reported](#) the account of a 33-year-old volunteer for Adams' 2021 mayoral campaign who said Greco asked him to work unpaid for two months on renovations to her Bronx home as a prerequisite to securing him a job in the mayor's administration.

Even after the former tech worker was hired last July as a program coordinator in the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, Greco continued to ask him to perform home renovation work, including during work hours, and repeatedly sought his help translating and responding to her work emails, he alleged.

Their relationship soured after he began refusing those requests, he told THE CITY, and he was terminated from his government job in June 2023.

Additionally, a business executive told THE CITY that Greco sought a \$10,000 donation to a nonprofit group she founded as the entrance fee to a Chinese-themed government event at Gracie Mansion hosted by Adams.



The business person told THE CITY at least five others were similarly approached by Greco. Both the executive and the former volunteer offered documents supporting their accounts.

Greco, who previously referred questions about the allegations to City Hall, didn't respond Thursday to requests for comment via phone calls and text messages.

City Hall spokesperson Charles Lutvak previously told THE CITY that Greco "strongly denies" the allegations, and he attributed the former tech-worker's claims to a "disgruntled former employee" who had been "terminated for documented cause."

He didn't respond Thursday to a request for comment.

The former tech worker said he hasn't been contacted by DOI but told THE CITY that learning of the agency's review "makes me feel heard."

"I feel used. Winnie redid her entire basement, and renovated her kitchen, dining area, and front door area with my help," he said. "It was free labor. She took advantage of me. It was completely unfair."

From Volunteer to Senior Advisor

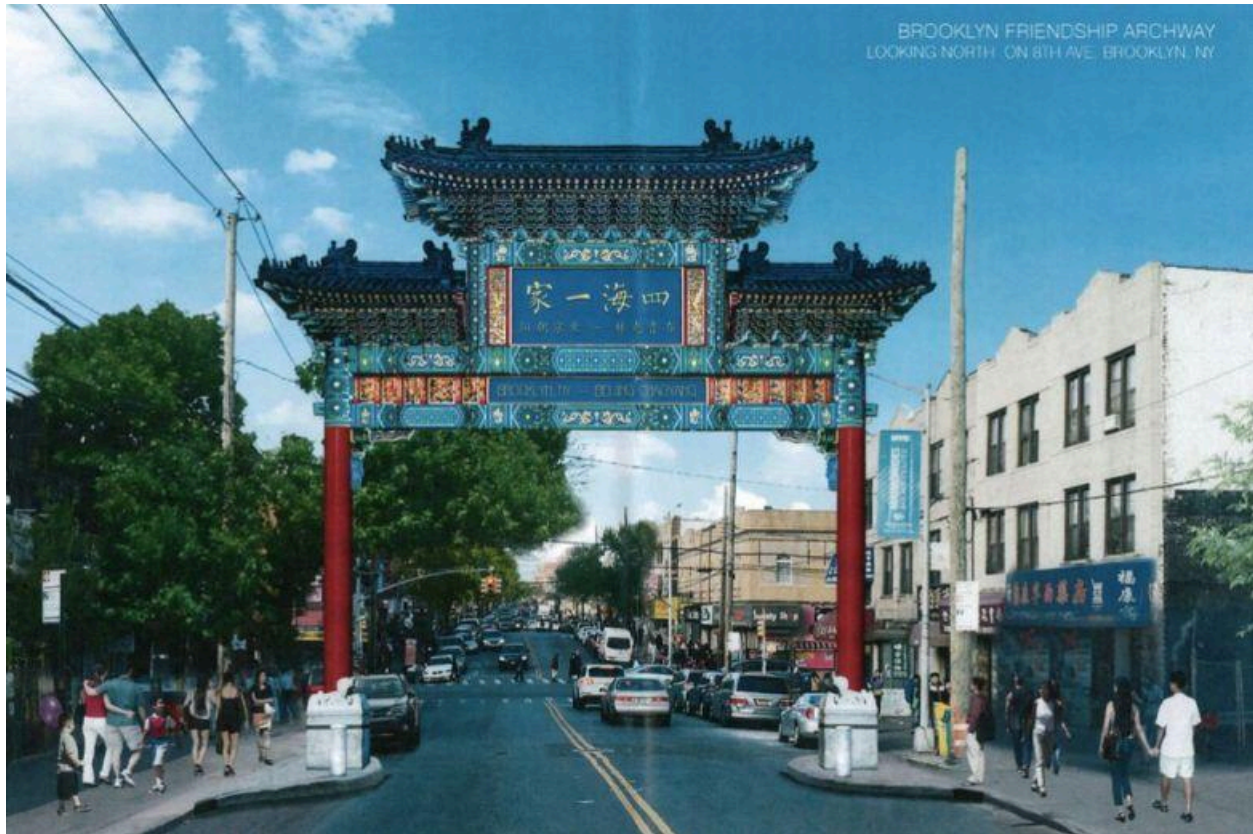
Greco's path from Borough Hall volunteer to a member of Adams' inner circle was not an ordinary ascension.

She served as Adams' liaison to the Chinese-American community for eight years, pitching him on meetings with dozens of government officials, business executives and nonprofit groups, while earning a reputation as a ubiquitous presence at his side at local Chinese-themed events.

Greco, who received no government paycheck while at Borough Hall, also shepherded Adams on at least two trips to China, where she introduced him to local government officials and business people, and sold him on an idea that would come to dominate a chunk of his tenure.

Adams and Greco spent years pushing a plan for the city to receive an ornate, 40-foot archway as a gift from a Beijing district government, and to install it as a gateway to Sunset Park's Chinese business district on 8th Avenue near 61st Street.

Greco separately founded a group, the Sino America New York Brooklyn Archway Association Corp, for which she raised at least \$220,000 from the Chinese-American community between 2013 and 2018 that she said would go toward the maintenance of the archway.



A rendering of a “Friendship Archway” that was supposed to be gifted from Beijing to Brooklyn’s Chinatown. Credit: Public Design Commission

At least \$7,000 from the money raised went toward the first trip Greco took with Adams and others to China in May 2014. More recent fundraising and expenditures for the archway association aren’t public because the group stopped submitting its tax filings to the IRS in 2018, and had its tax-exempt nonprofit status revoked last year by the IRS.

The fate of the archway isn’t clear even though its two biggest proponents are now ensconced at City Hall. Department of Transportation documents show the project budgeted at \$6 million, but with an expected completion date of April 2029.

Throughout Adams’ tenure as borough president, Greco also sat as one of the directors of his office’s affiliated nonprofit, the One Brooklyn Fund, which took in over \$2.5 million, and more recently she helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars toward Adams’ 2021 mayoral campaign, largely from the Chinese-American community.

Greco’s fundraising prowess came even as she played no formal role and received no pay from the 2021 campaign, a campaign spokesperson previously told THE CITY. In government financial disclosure forms, Greco reported receiving no income from any entity — private or government — in 2021.



Over the past two weeks, Adams has refused to directly answer questions by THE CITY about whether his office had referred the allegations raised against Greco for investigation.

The first time, he answered that, “We follow all reporting requirements. That is what we always do, and that’s just general.”

On Tuesday, he went a bit further, saying that “whenever there’s any form of allegation of any city employee, there’s a process. We have a Department of Investigation. They conduct their reviews. And I do not get involved with the reviews of the Department of Investigation if it reaches that level, or any other review.”

Asked that same day whether he had spoken to Greco in recent weeks, Adams answered, “When I see her, I say ‘Ni hao.’ You know, that’s ‘Hello.’”