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Former Muscogee County Deputy Clerk Willie Demps today pled guilty in Federal Court to multiple counts of conspiracy to commit bank fraud and tax evasion in connection with the theft of approximately \$1.3 million between 2010 and 2019. Court documents filed in connection with Demps' plea agreement indicate up to an additional \$5.5 million may be missing from the Muscogee County Clerk's office.

The steps leading to the arrest and guilty plea of Demps, a 30-year employee of the clerk's office, began with the November 2018 request for an audit by newly elected Superior Court Clerk Danielle Forté, just two weeks after she took her oath of office.

Assistant United States Attorney for the Middle District of Georgia Amy Helmick negotiated the plea agreement with Demps, the focal point of the federal case. Among the eight targets of the case, seven have pled guilty, including Demps.

Judge Clay Land accepted Demps' guilty plea in federal court Tuesday.

"One of my first official acts was to request a transitional audit based on discrepancies that were immediately apparent to me upon taking office," Forté said. "With the diligent leadership and foresight of Mayor Skip Henderson, the city's internal audit led to the discovery of criminal activity that has occurred over many years, dating as far back to 2010.

"While we are relieved that justice is being served, there is still a pending criminal case. Therefore, I am not able to make any further comment, since such statements may impede or interfere with the prosecution."

After discovery of the theft, Superior Court Clerk Forté implemented a number of financial and administrative protocols to safeguard city and county funds.