

## BROWARD METRO FINAL

# Ex-Sunrise officials receive probation

By Justine Gerety  
Staff Writer

A federal judge removed the threat of prison for former Sunrise officials John E. Montgomery and Robert T. O'Keefe on Wednesday when he threw out a jury's guilty verdict on extortion counts and sentenced them to probation for tax evasion.

Family members and friends broke into sobs of joy and relief when U.S. District Judge Thomas E. Scott announced his ruling at a Miami hearing they had feared would result in prison terms for the two men.

Lisa Montgomery, 27, who plans to wed on Saturday, said, "I was worried what it was going to be like walking down the aisle without my father. Now I'm going to have the

biggest smile on my face."

Montgomery, 49, and O'Keefe, 40, almost overcome by emotion, sputtered only a few words as they hugged supporters at the sentencing hearing.

"Justice has prevailed," said O'Keefe in a strained, high-pitched voice before he burst into tears.

"Three years . . ." Montgomery said bitterly, reflecting on the duration of a federal investigation of Sunrise city government, which put former Mayor John Lomelo and lobbyist Spike Leibowitz in federal prison.

"I love [the judge] so much. This is the happiest day, even happier than the day my son was born," said Leslie Luzinski, another daughter of Montgomery's.

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Montgomery and O'Keefe each could have faced maximum sentences of 56 years in prison if Scott had not overturned guilty verdicts on the extortion counts.

In addition to their probation, they were fined \$10,000 each and given five-year suspended sentences.

The two could serve prison time now only if they violated the terms of their probation. If an appeals court reinstates the extortion charges, however, Scott said he would impose prison time.

Scott's ruling came the same day that Steven Effenman, elected Tuesday, was sworn in as Montgomery's replacement on the Sunrise City Council. Montgomery is a former president of the council. O'Keefe served as chairman of the city's Planning and Zoning Board.

On Oct. 3, a jury in Fort Lauderdale had found the men guilty of conspiring to extort \$70,000 from a Georgia developer seeking to build a nursing home in Sunrise.

Each also was found guilty of filing false income tax returns in 1981 and 1982, convictions Judge Scott let stand.



### JOHN MONTGOMERY

Real estate broker, former city councilman

AGE: 49.

RESIDENCE: Sunrise.

**BACKGROUND:** City councilman from 1975 until he was removed from office in October 1985. Montgomery, a close friend of former Mayor John Lomelo, was council president during the 1983 period under federal investigation, and also was chairman of the city's industrial development task force. His dual role as council president and real estate broker was criticized by the state Commission on Ethics as a "recurring conflict of interest."



### ROBERT T. O'KEEFE

Real estate broker

AGE: 40.

RESIDENCE: Sunrise.

**BACKGROUND:** A business partner with Councilman John Montgomery in Nob Hill Realty of Sunrise Inc., and B&J Associates of the South Inc., a construction consulting firm. O'Keefe also was Montgomery's appointment to the Sunrise planning and zoning board and was board chairman during the period under federal investigation. The Montgomery-O'Keefe firms received more than \$150,000 in commissions on private property deals that required city approvals.