

## Commissioner ejects reporters from meeting, lambastes newspaper

Posted by [Joe Guillen](#) April 17, 2008

Cuyahoga County Commissioner Jimmy Dimora had two Plain Dealer reporters ejected from a public meeting on Thursday after he refused to answer questions about a county employee.

Reporters Mark Puente and Henry J. Gomez went to the meeting to ask Dimora about Rosemary Vinci, who is on Cuyahoga County Auditor Frank Russo's payroll. [Questions have been raised about Vinci's qualifications and why she was hired.](#)

Several people have said Vinci also does work for the commissioners, but Commissioners Tim Hagan and Peter Lawson Jones said they have never met Vinci or know her role.

Dimora did not return several calls to his office from Puente and one call to his home about Vinci.

Puente and Gomez approached Dimora after the regular meeting recessed. Dimora was preparing to begin a meeting of the county's Investment Advisory Committee, which he chairs.

Once he saw Puente and Gomez, Dimora questioned the reporters' motives and asked if they were tabloid journalists. Puente attempted to confirm that Dimora had no comment on the matter.

"He exploded when I asked about Rosemary Vinci," Puente recalled.

Dimora then told a county security guard to escort Puente and Gomez out.

"Dimora vocally and physically motioned for his head of security to lead us out of the room," Gomez said. "We were told to leave, and we left before we were physically forced."

Dimora did not respond to a message left after the meeting seeking comment.

Plain Dealer Editor Susan Goldberg said Dimora was out of line.

"It is unacceptable that our reporters would be evicted from a public meeting for daring to ask a question," Goldberg said. "I fail to see how asking an elected official about the role of a public employee -- whose salary is paid by taxpayers -- is grounds for removal from the meeting. These illegal, strong-arm tactics have no place in a free society. We strenuously object to this outrageous conduct."

At recent meetings, including Thursday's gathering, Dimora has criticized The Plain Dealer for its coverage of the county's acquisition and sale of the Ameritrust complex at East Ninth Street and Euclid Avenue.