

Sandy Annabi drug treatment 'attempt to game the system,' feds say

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Federal prosecutors say that former [Yonkers](#) City Councilwoman Sandy [Annabi](#)'s drug addiction, disclosed in advance of her sentencing, may be an attempt to shave time off her six-year prison sentence.

In a report compiled by the U.S. Department of Probation, [Annabi](#) detailed her addiction to the prescription sedative [Xanax](#) and said she will need treatment when she heads to prison on her bribery conviction.

Federal prosecutors fired back in a letter Friday saying [Annabi](#)'s alleged [Xanax](#) addiction "may well be an attempt to game the system,"

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jason P.W. Halperin and Perry Carbone wrote, opposing her placement in a drug-treatment program.

[Annabi](#), 42, a former two-term Democratic city council member, was sentenced to six years behind bars this month along with ex-city [Republican Party](#) boss [Zehy Jereis](#), 40, after a federal jury in Manhattan convicted them of scheming to sell [Annabi](#)'s vote on two lucrative development projects in [Yonkers](#).

"The Government disputes the defendant's alleged 'need' for addiction treatment and suspects that the defendants newly discovered [Xanax](#) dependence" may be an attempt to have up to a year chopped off her sentence if she successfully completes drug treatment in prison, Halperin and Carbone wrote.

In the report compiled by the U.S. Department of Probation, [Annabi](#) is quoted as telling the probation officer "I can't live without it," according to a letter written by [Annabi](#)'s lawyer Edward Sapone to U.S. District Judge Colleen



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[McMahon](#) and obtained by Newsday.

"The fear and stress of going to prison is too much for her to handle without her crutch," Sapone said in the letter, referring to Xanax.

Annabi has been taking the drug -- which is commonly prescribed to treat anxiety attacks -- for years, he noted. The dosage she had been taking was 0.5 milligrams "as needed," But she has raised that to 4 milligrams a day now, Sapone said in the letter.

Even with the 800 percent increase, she still has panic attacks that include heart palpitations and sleeplessness, the letter said.

"She is totally reliant upon the drug to get through each day and takes extra pills to deal with the stress," Sapone wrote. "While Ms. Annabi cannot imagine life without Xanax she would like to break her addiction."

Annabi, who likely will serve her time at Danbury Federal Prison in [Connecticut](#), did not respond to requests for comment. A spokeswoman for the federal Bureau of Prisons said Danbury, which currently houses more than 1,300 female prisoners at its low security prison and adjacent minimum security prison camp, has a drug-treatment program available to prisoners. The Bureau of Prisons will decide whether Annabi is in need of drug treatment.

Sapone wants McMahon, who sentenced Annabi, to make a recommendation to the federal Bureau of Prisons that his client be enrolled in a 500-hour drug treatment program after she surrenders March 4 to begin her prison stint.

Sapone also asked McMahon to reconsider the more than \$1 million in fines and restitution she imposed on Annabi, saying the loss of her condominium on Rumsey Road and her family home on Bacon Place should be enough to satisfy the financial part of her sentence.

Annabi was convicted in March of conspiring to sell her vote on two development projects -- including the controversial \$600 million [Ridge Hill](#) project, on which Annabi cast the deciding vote after Jereis secured a \$60,000 consulting contract from the developer.

Jereis, 40, Annabi's cousin, was convicted of paying the bribes and sentenced to four years behind bars. Neither the judge nor the jury bought Jereis' testimony that he had lavished the gifts and money on Annabi in an attempt to romance her.

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