

Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken said she was told the company gave its approximately 150 employees a severance package of 60 days' pay and the continuation of health insurance for an indefinite period of time.

Provost, who did not respond late Friday afternoon to requests for further comment, provided no further details in his statement on the exact nature of the company's "legacy issues."

However, they most likely involve the criminal convictions of three executives and a former board member in the past two years and the ongoing bankruptcy filing of majority owner Hong Kong-based Pacific Andes International Holdings, which owns 60 percent of the company.

National Fish & Seafood, which was founded in 1979, also did not offer additional details on what will happen to its existing line of products, including the Matlaw's stuffed clam line that is its signature product.

The company, which processed seafood at its 66,000-square-foot facility at 159 E. Main St., has not been a bastion of positive news recently, as it primarily was in the news for the series of the criminal convictions involving Jack Ventola, its founder and president, and other company executives and board members.

National Fish also was embroiled in a juicy corporate espionage lawsuit against a former employee, Kathleen A. Scanlon, and Florida-based seafood competitor Tampa Bay Fisheries and its affiliated companies.

In its suit, National Fish alleged that Scanlon, who served as its head of research and development and quality control, stole trade secrets, recipes, confidential processing information and other sensitive data on her way out the door to a new position with Tampa Bay Fisheries.

After dueling for eight months, National Fish and the assorted defendants agreed in March to settle the federal lawsuit before it went to trial. The terms of the settlement were sealed.

But it was the convictions of Ventola and others that defined the public perception of the company.

Ventola, 71, began his two-year sentence in federal prison in July 2018, after being convicted three months earlier in U.S. District Court in Boston for failure to pay taxes on \$2.9 million he fraudulently diverted from National Fish in schemes that ran from 2006 to 2013.

As part of his plea deal with prosecutors, Ventola admitted conspiring with two other National Fish executives — senior sales executive Richard J. Pandolfo and head of operations James Corbett, who died in 2013 and never was criminally charged — and National Fish accountant and board member Michael Bruno in several schemes to defraud the Internal Revenue Service and majority owner Pacific Andes.

Ventola, who lives in Ipswich, also received one year of supervised release, a \$75,000 fine and was ordered to pay \$1.07 million in restitution to the IRS.

In January, he filed an appeal of his two-year sentence, claiming he received a more severe punishment than Bruno.

Bruno, a former board member and outside accountant for the company, was sentenced to a year of probation, with the first six months served in home confinement, and fined \$20,000 and ordered to pay more than \$1 million in restitution to the IRS.

Pandolfo also was sentenced to a year's probation, ordered to pay \$26,000 in restitution to the IRS and fined almost \$26,000.