

City Economic Development Director actively engages in politics at taxpayer expense

Public records show Jim Stifler campaigning for candidates and the pro-Phase II effort

HUDSON, OH – Public records published by the Hudson Community Coalition today on [The Hudson Files](#) website show Hudson Economic Development Director Jim Stifler participating in political campaign activities using taxpayer-funded resources contrary to city policy and established ethics standards for public officials, in what appears to be an effort to support the projects and candidates favored by City Manager Jane Howington and Council President Bill Wooldredge. These efforts were also contrary to the expressed views of Hudson voters.

Stifler's disregard for the views of city residents is evident from an email that he sent following the defeat of the Wooldredge- and Howington-led Phase II advisory vote in which he stated: "shame on our largely apathetic residents."

These public records, which can be found in their entirety on [The Hudson Files](#), present a picture of Stifler working as a community organizer and political operative to support Wooldredge's and Howington's policies while on the city payroll. His support for their agenda was evident, as indicated in an email from May 2019 which he discusses creating a town called "Janeville" featuring elements of "New Urbanism", the approach to development seen in the Phase II project that Hudson voters rejected at the ballot box.

Prior to becoming Hudson's Economic Development Director, Stifler had never held a similar position, and has no prior training or experience in economic development for a municipality.

Also among these records is a series of emails that show Stifler advising the campaigns of Nicole Davis and Kate Schlademan via city email, meeting with the candidates, weighing in on campaign literature, and agreeing to provide information to support their efforts to get elected. Previously released public records published on [The Hudson Files](#) show Stifler working with the pro-Phase II campaign and conducting a "Get Out the Vote" effort using tax-payer funded city email.

In September 2019, multiples emails between Stifler and MJ Lehman, a city contractor and campaign consultant for candidate Nicole Davis, indicate that Stifler provided counsel regarding Davis' campaign literature amidst fears that her materials weren't "bold enough". According to the emails, Stifler met with Davis to discuss her campaign and assured Lehman that there were "lots of easy fixes" to improve Davis' campaign. These exchanges were all using Stifler's taxpayer-funded city email account.

Stifler also agreed to meet with candidate Kate Schlademan, who in June 2019 asked Stifler to discuss the "city in general" because "any information going in to the campaign would be greatly appreciated." Stifler arranged the meeting via his taxpayer-funded city email, while apparently on the clock during normal city business hours.

In addition to campaigning for candidates, public records previously released on [The Hudson Files](#) indicate that Stifler was active in the "Vote Yes" campaign for Phase II last year. In March 2019, city staff discussed talking points Stifler would use in a pro-Phase II video being made, and in April 2019 Stifler sent a "Get out the Vote" style email to encourage city employees to "have a say in the future of Downtown Hudson."

This pattern of behavior appears counter to the standards for public officials outlined the [Code of Ethics](#) from the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) which calls on public officials to "serve all persons with courtesy and respect" and to "subordinate personal interests and institutional loyalties to the public good".

The Hudson Files website was developed by a coalition of community groups in Hudson to increase public awareness of (a) the manner in which long-serving city officials are operating, and (b) whether city policies and procedures are being adhered to, and to allow citizens to determine whether City officials' actions and decisions on city matters are in the best interests of the city and its citizens. Residents should check [The Hudson Files website](#) regularly for updates as they become available.

The Hudson Files is a joint project of the Hudson Community Coalition, a partnership of organizations seeking to advance civic engagement in Hudson on a variety of issues. The Coalition's founding members include:

About Hudson Environmental Council LLC: The purpose of the Hudson Environmental Council LLC is to promote and advocate for healthy land, air, and water for all who call Hudson their home. Our mission is to monitor and secure healthy and safe land use through research and advocacy for a clean and beautiful natural environment. Our belief is that any land use should be carefully considered with respect to its direct and indirect impact on the environment, both for the short term, and for the long term.

About Hudson's Voice: The purpose of Hudson's Voice, LLC is to promote and advance the common good and general welfare of the Hudson, Ohio Community through a social community movement designed to be an effective resource to the City and its City Council, by elevating and encouraging discourse regarding legislation, ballot initiatives, property development and/or other civic issues that affect the greater good of the citizens of Hudson.

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