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EDITOR'S PICK

FEATURED

## Reports: Developers funded bulk of Kleinschmidt campaign

Katie Jansen Mar 16, 2016



The Herald-Sun | Alex Dixon

Chapel Hill incumbent Mayor Mark Kleinschmidt (left) checks return results at his elections results party. Kleinschmidt lost to new mayoral candidate Pam Hemminger. The Herald-Sun | Alex M. Dixon

CHAPEL HILL — Recently filed campaign finance reports show that during his 2015 campaign, former Chapel Hill mayor Mark Kleinschmidt accepted more than \$10,000 in donations from individuals associated with the real estate development sector.

The \$10,584 in donations was detailed in Kleinschmidt's year-end report filed Feb. 22 — nearly a month after the Jan. 31 deadline. It listed contributions ranging between \$150 and \$336 from employees of Chapel Hill-based developers such as East West Partners and Eller Capital Partners, and from out-of-state developers like Trammell Crow Residential and Caves Valley Partners.

Many of these donations were dated during September or early October 2015, while others aren't dated at all. But none of the donations were mentioned in the pre-election campaign finance report, which was intended to include any donations received before Oct. 19.

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Kleinschmidt's pre-election report detailed \$6,346 in individual contributions over \$50, with many donations coming from retired residents, self-employed residents or UNC professors.

His year-end report listed an additional \$14,786 in individual donations over \$50.

Kleinschmidt said that he missed the filing deadline because his sister, who was his treasurer for the campaign, fell ill and was hospitalized. He also said the dates listed on the year-end donations were the dates written on the checks, but the campaign didn't receive the donations until after the pre-election report had been filed.

"There is no nefarious anything going on," he said. "It's just the way things came to us."

Of 33 separate donations from developers or their family members, three are dated for after Oct. 19, while 12 entries are undated. The rest of the contributions are dated for before Oct. 19, going as far back as Sep. 23.

This discrepancy in dates also occurs for many of the donations that came from outside the development sector.

Kleinschmidt said that although he trailed opponent Pam Hemminger — who unseated Kleinschmidt in the fall election — in fundraising for much of the campaign, a lot of donations rolled in at the very end.

He said he appreciated the endorsements and donations he received from diverse, progressive sources and that his donations from developers didn't weigh more heavily than any other contributions.

"We had money from across the political spectrum," he said. "For anyone to think that I or any other candidate running was in the pocket of any particular interest is ridiculous."

Kleinschmidt said he is proud that Chapel Hill elections have a limit of \$336 for individual donations.

"Money isn't the thing that defines our elections," he said.

But Charlie Humble, a member of the Chapel Hill Alliance for a Livable Town, said many residents are concerned by the way the Town Council has worked with developers in the past. He cited a closed-door deal that could potentially allow development on the American Legion property, where some residents said they would rather see a park or commercial space. That deal was made six days after voters ousted Kleinschmidt and two other council members.

Kleinschmidt's total of \$10,584 from developers or developers' family members represents about 71 percent of the contributions over \$50 reported on the year-end report. The contribution breakdown by company is as follows:

— \$672 from individuals who work at GHK Developments, Inc., the firm behind two Walgreens locations in Chapel Hill — the one on the corner of Franklin Street and Estes Drive and the one on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Weaver Dairy Road.

— \$1,830 from individuals — or their spouses or other family members — employed by Trammell Crow Residential, a real estate developer working on Alexan Chapel Hill, a 265-apartment complex located on Elliott Road that is slated to be completed this December.



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— \$2,352 from individuals — or their spouses or other family members — representing East West Partners, the Chapel Hill-based developer behind several projects in town, including the highly contested Obey Creek, which was approved by the council last year.

— \$3,360 from individuals — or their spouses or other family members — who work for real estate developer Caves Valley Partners.

— \$912 from individuals who work at Eller Capital Partners, the firm that controls several Chapel Hill apartment complexes.

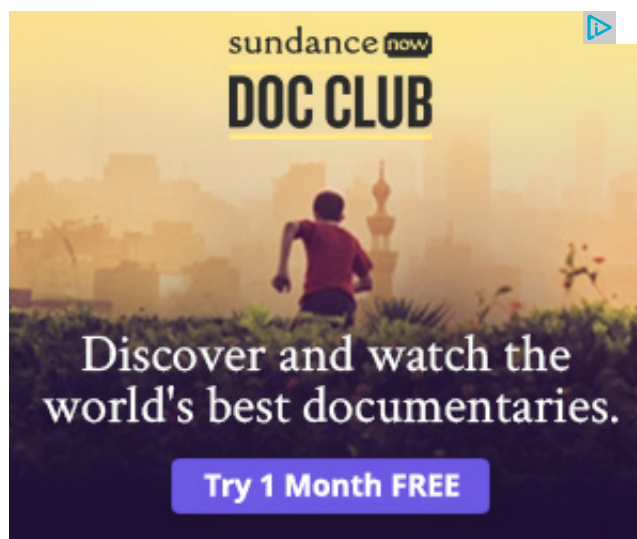
— \$336 from an individual who works at Scott Murray Land Planning Inc., a firm that has helped with many development projects in Chapel Hill.

— \$336 from an individual who works at Markel Eagle Partners, a real estate asset manager.

— \$536 from individuals representing Resolute Building, a contractor that has been involved in several Chapel Hill projects, including East 54 5000.

— \$250 from an individual representing Ballentine Associates, a land planning and land surveying firm that was involved in Southern Village and Meadowmont.

Hemminger, who filed her year-end report Jan. 7, reported \$5,773.07 in contributions over \$50 on her year-end report and an additional \$5,696.81 in donations over \$50 on her pre-election report. All contributions on her year-end report were dated for after Oct. 19, and many of her donors were retired, self-employed or professors.



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