

Who's who among Financial backers?

'We support the mayor': A review of campaign finance records filed since 2003 by Friends of Weisner shows a wide range of donor sources

May 25, 2008 By Dan Campana dcampana@scn1.com

AURORA -- With no sign out front, you might not know you've found Cordogan, Clark & Associates office at 960 Ridgeway Ave.

Without knowing the address, you'd be less likely to recognize these contributors to Mayor Tom Weisner's election campaign -- Comp Partners, 716 North Wells Partnership, 930 Ridgeway Partnership, OSNB Trust 7051 and PAC Partners.

Those entities, which represent different ownership branches of Cordogan Clark, have given nearly \$14,000 to Weisner over the last five years. Combined with donations from the company and its namesake, John Cordogan, about \$33,000 has gone from 960 Ridgeway to Weisner's coffers.

"They're just different partners," Cordogan said, referencing leasing, the precast division and land ownership. "It's not Cordogan Clark donating ... the reality is, each entity is each entity."

A review of campaign finance records filed since 2003 by Friends of Weisner show several examples of thousands of dollars going into the mayor's election funds using a variety of proprietary identities and business names. Considered a loophole in Illinois campaign finance rules, the techniques are legal under a system some reform advocates describe as the "Wild West."

"Corporations don't write checks, people do," said David Morrison, deputy director of the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform. "That's what ought to be listed."

Added campaign finance expert Kent Redfield, a professor of political studies at the University of Illinois-Springfield, "There's no reason to do that other than to obscure where the money is coming from."

Local business owners disagree, saying common addresses don't mean an attempt to circumvent the spirit of campaign finance disclosure.

Dolan & Murphy, and its vice president, have given \$7,320 to Weisner's campaign. Finance records show five entities -- Galena West, L.M.D., Mitchell Road Partnership, Richter Partnership and the Tollview Partnership -- used Dolan & Murphy's 765 Orchard Ave. address to kick in another \$5,000.

Dan Dolan Sr. described them as "passive" land investment groups for which he essentially serves as an executor. He also receives the OK to make campaign donations to "pro-development" candidates.

"They put their fate somewhat in my hands," Dolan said. "These are all separate entities. They're not part of Dolan & Murphy."

Rocky Pintozzi says he "bleeds" Aurora and believes in Weisner. Although you won't find his name specifically in any campaign finance records, four businesses he's affiliated with do -- Comfort Suites hotel on North Broadway, Hampton Inn & Suites on Bushwood Drive, Broadway Hotels LLC and Midwest Management Inc. Together, they've made nearly \$6,600 in campaign donations, \$5,000 of which came last year.

"As far as transparency goes, we support the mayor," Pintozzi said, describing himself as a "general partner with controlling interest" in the four contributing businesses. "He's making the right steps."

Pintozzi has known Weisner for at least 15 years and doesn't support him blindly. Pintozzi points to Weisner's 2006 tiebreaking vote to approve a hotel in a stretch of retail on Orchard Road not far from Hampton Inn.

"Even when he voted to allow competition outside my back door ... I supported him after that," said Pintozzi. "I believe in what he does."