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Another River Bend trustee facing election fraud charges

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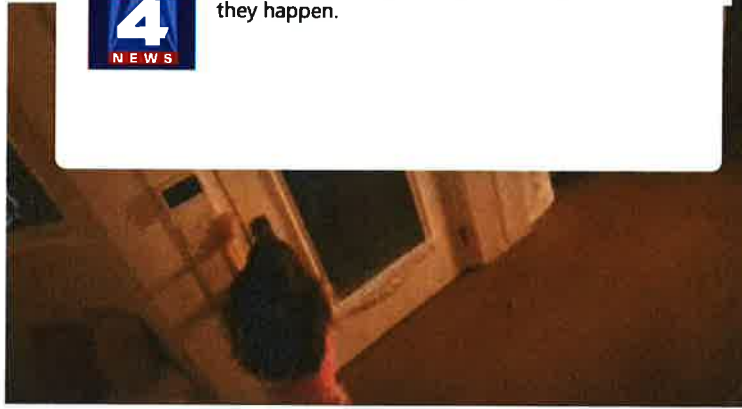
RIVER BEND, Mo. — Another leader in a tiny Jackson County village is facing election fraud charges.

River Bend, Missouri, leaders were set to have their first meeting Tuesday night since [former trustee Jessica Caswell was charged](#) with willfully providing false documentation required for voter registration and filing false documents, both felonies.

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Now Caswell's husband has been indicted as well on the same charges.

James Hoppe had an ankle monitor removed Tuesday but still can't be within 100 feet of River Bend's city hall under the conditions of his bond.

The charges stem from November's board of trustees elections. Court documents say the two didn't meet the residency requirement to run for office.

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Hoppe won a tie-breaker against his wife when they both received six votes.

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River Bend had an estimated population of 3, according to the 2020 census, and 17 registered voters. The village was also set to be home to the [Smokey River Entertainment District](#), a marijuana entertainment area.

Many with ties to River Bend have questioned how the board was appointed or formed.

"How are these codes being passed? Who is doing it? Where is this money going?" Michael Schneider asked when FOX4 visited the village earlier this month.

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The village said through a letter that the Board of Trustees was appointed by the previous board. They believed they were the only residents in the 2000-acre community, located north of Independence and Sugar Creek along 291 Highway.

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But to ease concerns, they decided to have a special election in November. Four candidates tied with six votes a piece for two seats.

"It came to a draw where we actually drew straws on it, and I guess I got that," Schneider explained.

Daniel Weiss and Caswell, who according to her social media, worked for one of the men behind Smokey River, lost the tie-breaker to Schneider and Hoppe.

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Election records show Hoppe and Caswell live in building that resembles a warehouse, which was also the [site of Smokey River's 4/20 festival](#), behind the River Bend town hall. Smokey River has since withdrawn its redevelopment plans.

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"People have said a long time ago that there were actually people living in this building over here. That's not true; [nobody lives there](#)," Schneider said.

Schneider believes after his wife's death last month, he and his son are the village's only actual fulltime residents.

"I'm here to tell you I'm not going to fold. I'm not going to be corrupt. I'm going to do things right, and I'm going to help River Bend," Schneider told FOX4.

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