



WENDY MARTINEZ

# Stack's state chief lands \$48G contract for Union City job

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UNION CITY — Mayor Brian Stack's full-time Assembly chief of staff has landed a \$48,000 contract working for the city, raising the questions whether conflicts could arise from working at two levels of government.

The city commissioners recently approved a contract between Nuevo Jersey Consulting, LLC, which is owned by Chief of Staff Wendy Martinez of Stack's assembly office. The one-year contract with Nuevo Jersey Consulting runs from March 8. In her proposal, Martinez estimates her company would work between 80 to 120 per hours per month for the city and charge \$4,000 per month.

Martinez also works for Stack in the Assembly — according to an Assembly employee list, she has worked there since 2004 and earns \$65,000 a year as a full-time employee. And any full-time employee who works at least 35 hours a week is entitled to state dental and health benefits, officials said.

In her proposal, Martinez says that her public media consultation services are available for emergencies 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

"I am required to work 35 hours within a seven-day week by the New Jersey State Assembly, which I do that and more," Martinez said. "This (Nuevo Jersey Consulting) is my private company."

Stack, who has a reputation as a workaholic, said that Martinez is indeed available around the clock and "goes over and above" her duties.

"If any contractor or employee with the city or state doesn't perform to an acceptable standard, they wouldn't last with me," Stack said.

This is the second year that Martinez has had a contract for professional public and media relation services to Union City, Stack said.

Her resume shows she also has worked in public relations for the city of Newark and Bergen County, and has worked also as an assistant coordinator on Sharpe James's mayoral race and James E. McGreevey's gubernatorial campaign.

Derek Roseman, of the state Assembly office, said that there is no policy preventing full-time Assembly employees from holding outside jobs.

Christine Vanek, an attorney working for Scarinci & Hollenbeck, LLC, representing Union City, said that she is not aware of any complaints regarding performance of Martinez's company with respect to the city. She also said that the city has issued requests for proposals and had awarded the contract to Martinez's firm in accordance with New Jersey "pay-to-play" laws.

"I follow state Pay-to-Play laws. It is a contract that anyone else could have gotten and anyone else could have applied for," Martinez added.

Albert Porroni, executive director of the bi-partisan Office of Legislative Services, said there is a potential for conflict if an employee works for the city and state. But he said that it is up to the "two masters" to decide whether there is an ethical problem.

Porroni said Martinez has to demonstrate that she conducts her business as an independent contractor, meeting standards relating to whose equipment she uses, and who pays the expenses and Social Security taxes.

Stack said Martinez meets those standards.