

Desert Hot Springs Councilman Adam Sanchez to challenge Mayor Yvonne Parks

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Amid well-publicized political divisions in Desert Hot Springs, Councilman Adam Sanchez is taking steps to unseat Mayor Yvonne Parks.

Sanchez is just two years into his first term on council, which means he wouldn't normally be on this November's ballot.

As of this morning, he and Parks were the only candidates to pull papers for the race.

Sanchez did not return a call seeking comment today.

In 2011, Sanchez ran a grassroots campaign that seized on voters' frustrations with an apparent lack of accountability and transparency at city hall.

"People wanted to see more trust in government," Sanchez told The Desert Sun from his celebration party that year. "With everything that's happened this past year with the City Council, I think people wanted to see fresh perspective on the council."

Parks seemed unfazed by Sanchez's bid, telling The Desert Sun that "it's not unusual" to see a councilman in a safe seat challenge the sitting mayor.

Parks was in a similar position in 2007, when she unseated then mayor Alex Bias. Sanchez was also on that ballot, coming in second to Parks.

Parks has been campaigning as a slate with fellow incumbents Mayor Pro Tem Scott Matas and Councilwoman Jan Pye.

The city directly elects its mayor for a two-year term.

"I'm going to run a positive campaign based on accomplishments," Parks said today. "We're running as a slate. If the community likes what we've done in the last four years, five years, then let the community speak."

Sanchez and his political ally, Councilman Russell Betts, have had several public disagreements with Parks.

The divisions on council have been widening since 2009, when Betts unsuccessfully tried to unseat Parks.

Sanchez and Betts have recently been at the center of a city probe after City Manager Rick Daniels accused them of creating a “hostile” work environment through what he calls “bullying and abhorrent behavior.”

Both council members have denied any wrongdoing.

Parks said it was too early to tell if to tell what role, if any, Daniels’ complaint would have in the campaign.

“I have no idea. Time will tell,” Parks said. “What’s the month, July? And when is the election, November? A lot can happen.”

Matas, Pye and challenger Joe McKee have pulled papers for the city’s council race this fall. Ballot regular Robert Bentley, who has run for both mayor and council in recent years, has an appointment with the city clerk today.

Economist John Paul Valdez has been raising money for a mayoral campaign, but has not yet pulled papers, according to the city clerk’s office.

Candidates have until Aug. 9 to qualify for the Nov. 5 ballot.