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Valley candidates preparing for November ballot

Desert Hot Springs Councilman Adam Sanchez's effort to unseat Mayor Yvonne Parks is shaping up to be the highlight of a relatively small November ballot.

Candidates who wanted to run for offices in Desert Hot Springs, Palm Springs and a handful of special districts had until Friday to qualify for the Nov. 5 ballot.

Palm Springs tends to gain the most attention during the odd-year elections as the city traditionally attracts the most candidates. This year, only two challengers and the two incumbents submitted enough valid signatures to make the ballot.

"When you have candidates that look like they're pretty strong, it's discouraging to others to spend the time, effort, money," said Ruth Debra, chairwoman of the Desert Stonewall Democrats, which takes an active role in recruiting and supporting candidates in the western Coachella Valley races.

"It's not an easy thing to do, even for something as low profile as city council."

The election rhetoric already started in Desert Hot Springs, where Sanchez this week used the council dais to disavow "negativity" on the campaign trail.

"Let people have choices without muddying the waters," Sanchez said during the council member comments section of Tuesday's meeting.

Parks' other challenger, local economist John-Paul Valdez, is also out to raise his political profile, including investing in a billboard.

Here's a roundup of the rest of the races that some valley voters will see this fall:

Desert Hot Springs City Council: Mayor Pro Tem Scott Matas, Councilwoman Jan Pye and challenger Joe McKee, who has served on several city committees, all qualified for the ballot.

City officials were still verifying the signatures for Robert Bentley, who has run for council and mayor before, and for Steven Kong, a political newcomer who was part of the Occupy Coachella Valley movement.

Palm Springs City Council: Mayor Pro Tem Chris Mills and Councilwoman Ginny Foat will be challenged by Judy Evans Deertrack, a land-use consultant, and Jeffrey Nichols, a nonprofit director who ran for mayor in 2011.

Desert Recreation District: Incumbent Charlie Smith is challenged by Silvia Paz, a senior aide to Assemblyman V. Manuel Pérez. No one challenged Director Rudy Acosta, who retains his seat without appearing on the ballot.

Desert Water Agency: Michael Paduano, who ran for the board in 2011, is trying to unseat one of the three incumbents. Directors Pat Oygur, Joe Stuart and Jim Cioffi are all seeking re-election.

Mission Springs Water District: Mission Springs Water District: Two challengers are trying to replace board members Jeff Bowman and Nancy Wright. The county registrar's office on Friday confirmed the paperwork for Malcolm McLean, also a 2011 candidate, and for Mary Jane Sanchez-Fulton, a College of the Desert trustee.

Southern Coachella Valley Community Services District: Two incumbents – Becky Broughton and Ann Wells – qualified. They face no challengers, and will retain their seats without an election.

A third incumbent didn't file papers, so the deadline to qualify is extended until Wednesday.

County supervisors will have to fill a short-term vacancy after no one showed interest, according to the county registrar's office.

No one challenged the two incumbents in the Valley Sanitary District, so Richard Friestad and Merritt Wiseman keep their seats without a campaign.