

Written by

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Dispute over political sign in Desert Hot Springs ends in uneasy truce

To Whom it may concern

10/5/13

re 13967 Cactus Drive

Desert Hot Springs, ca 92240

I am the Leaser of above property

I have not given Adam Sanchez permission to put up any Campaign sign

at 13967 Cactus , Desert Hot Springs, Ca 92240



DESERT HOT SPRINGS — Five days after a sign dispute between rival candidates in a city political race led to police involvement, a truce of sorts was announced Monday.

Last Friday, Desert Hot Springs mayoral candidate and Councilman Adam Sanchez walked into the local police station and filed a complaint against a landlord whom he claimed had an “Adam for Mayor” campaign sign removed from his tenant’s lawn in the 13900 block of Cactus Avenue.

Sanchez said the tenant gave him permission to put the sign in the yard. However, property owner Anthony Santillo, a Los Angeles area resident who owns several properties in Desert

Hot Springs, said he wanted signs from Sanchez's political opponent, incumbent Desert Hot Springs Mayor Yvonne Parks, marking the lawn instead.

On Saturday, a day after the police report was filed, the property manager, Toni Ramirez, presented authorities with a signed a letter from the tenant stating that he had not "given Adam Sanchez permission to put any campaign sign" on his property.

Also, the property owner, Santillo, said in email forwarded to several candidates in the race, including Parks and Sanchez, that he "talked to Sanchez's people and told them I don't have time for this craziness with police calling, the press calling, news crews and then getting my tenants involved. I told them I will not allow any signs of any kind for this election — call a truce to this craziness."

Santillo went on to state that he "would not support a candidate who would go to these extremes for something so petty."

"I just think it's crazy that someone running for mayor would make such a big stink about this," Santillo said Monday. "It doesn't make sense to have 20 different signs across a property supporting different candidates. I own the property. I should have a right to put a sign on any part of the property I want."

Santillo said he felt bad for his tenant and doesn't want him caught in the middle of these "petty" politics.

"If the tenant wants to put a sign in the inside of their window, that's fine, but the outside grounds are my property," he added.

State Assembly Bill 337, which amended 1940.4 of the Civil Code when it passed in September 2011, prohibits landlords from barring "a tenant from posting or displaying political signs relating to an election or legislative vote, the initiative, referendum, or recall process, or issues before a public body for a vote, except under certain circumstances."

Under the law, which was aimed more at apartment dwellers, tenants are allowed to post political signs on their windows, balconies, doors and outside walls. However, under certain circumstances, such as the size of the sign, the lease terms or a violation of local laws, a landlord can prohibit certain political signs from being placed. Common areas are also excluded under the law. Sanchez's sign was posted on the outside fence of the homeowner's lawn.

Councilman Scott Matas, who also is running for reelection, said the issue has been a big "waste of taxpayer money, and this is obviously all been politically motivated — it's a cheap trick.

Matas, who is a supporter of Parks, also stated in an email to Sanchez that until the sign "issue is resolved, I will not be putting any more signs up, and I suggest you do the same.

This property owner owns more than 50 homes in this community and will not allow you to treat his properties this way.”

On Monday, Sanchez said the person whom he received permission from was the leaser’s mother. Sanchez said that had the son known about his mother’s conversation with him, the son “would have probably never signed the letter.”

Sanchez said “for the sake of the family, who is living there,” he is not planning to replace the sign, which was taken down again by Saturday morning.

“Frankly, I just want my sign back because it’s stolen property,” said Sanchez, who is planning on meeting with Desert Hot Springs Police Chief Kate Singer to discuss the issue.

“The important thing here is that people have learned about renter’s rights,” Sanchez noted.