

Desert Sun

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Ex-manager files claim against city

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Jerry Hanson alleges he was libeled and wants his contract reinstated

By Nelsy Rodriguez

The Desert Sun

Former City Manager Jerry Hanson - who retired in July after public outcry over his compensation level, land holdings and potential conflicts of interest - has filed a claim against the city, its City Council and interim City Manager Corky Larson

The claim:

alleges libel in a staff report

seeks Hanson's unpaid vacation and severance time; and

seeks reinstatement of his final contract - a reinstatement that could cost the city as much as \$3 million.

"Whatever, I've been sued," Larson, a veteran attorney after whom the Larson Justice Center in Indio is named, said Wednesday. "As a (former) county supervisor it doesn't raise my blood pressure."

Larson said Wednesday she had actually expected the claim sooner and at this point is not very concerned.

The claim, Larson said, does not specify how much Hanson is seeking in retribution.

Hanson's new Riverside-based attorney who specializes in employment law and criminal defense, Danuta Tuszynska, did not return calls requesting comment Wednesday.

Hanson claims the city has not paid him for wages accrued, vacation time, severance pay and accumulated leave, Larson said.

The City Council voted in September on a technicality of public meetings procedure to do just that.

The June 7 contract

Two months ago, interim City Attorney Toni Eggebraaten and Larson presented to the City Council an ordinance to reject Hanson's June 7 employment contract - his 10th with the city.

While the contract was passed by a 3-0 closed-session vote, with Mayor Matt Weyuker, Vice Mayor Mary Stephens and Councilman Hank Hohenstein the only council members in attendance at the meeting, the City Council did not take a vote in public session to approve the actions taken behind closed doors.