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DHS residents want answers

Multi-million dollar city deficit causes concer



Desert Hot Springs, Calif. -

When we broke the news that Desert Hot Springs faces a multi-million dollar deficit last week, Mayor Yvonne Parks said she was blindsided by the city's bleak financial outlook.

People we spoke with in Desert Hot Springs Tuesday could not believe the mayor and the

entire council were not aware their city was projected to run out of money by early next year.

"How wouldn't they know? That's what they do for a living," 33-year DHS resident, Sam Jones, said. "They're supposed to run the city. You're telling me that they just don't know, yet they're going to go bankrupt."

Faith in Desert Hot Springs city government has gone up in smoke with this crowd of locals gathered on a bar patio on Palm Canyon Drive.

"I'd like to know why does City Hall have to steal money from the people?" Art Shine said. "We're paying through the nose as is."

A few blocks up Palm Drive at the popular Miracle Springs Resort and Spa, the long time owner says the city needs to make spending cuts, and should not come looking to businesses like his for more revenue to balance the budget.

"It's gotta end and it's gotta stop," Mike Bickford said. "They can't tax their way out of it. We have the highest TOT (Transient Occupancy Tax) tax in the valley. So they just can not suck anymore blood out of the local businesses."

Trying to uncover who knew the city was going broke and when they knew it, we called former city manager Rick Daniels at his new city manager's job in Needles. Every call went to voicemail. Yvonne Parks has declined multiple interview requests since the Riverside County Registrar announced she was beaten by Adam Sanchez in the race for mayor by 12 votes.

"Public servants all over the world are burying us," Bickford said. "It's not alone in Desert Hot Springs. So yes they've overspent, and they can't pass out public money fast enough."

Bickford points to high pensions, public official salaries and overtime pay as things the should be cut back to balance the city's budget.

"Something's gotta give somewhere," Bickford said. "We definitely need law enforcement, but we run a lot of overtime. Maybe we could use the citizen's on patrol more fully. Maybe we can get some more volunteers to help with the city."

At a special public meeting Tuesday night, Interim City Manager, Robert Adams who took over in September, announced DHS faces an even larger fiscal deficit than was originally thought. Adams estimates the deficit to be between \$4-7 million dollars. He said if no changes are made, the city would have \$6.9 million more in expenditures than revenues in 2014.

City Council will meet again November 19th to discuss putting into action the ideas for closing the fiscal deficit that were discussed at tonight's meeting.