



Erica Felci. / Desert Sun file photo

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Desert Hot Springs attracting unwanted national attention

The colossal case of sticker shock that Desert Hot Springs residents are now experiencing is largely because the city's new budget numbers are so different from the ones elected leaders have touted for months.

The city is now gaining unwanted national attention as its leaders consider municipal bankruptcy and even disincorporation.

The new numbers, which didn't come out until after the Nov. 5 election, stand in stark contrast to the ones Mayor Yvonne Parks was still touting on her campaign website last week.

Online, she told voters “our council adopted the current mid year budget with a surplus of approximately \$236,000 and a potential for a healthy reserve of \$4.1 million by the end of the year.”

The budget, she states on the site, is “conservative, sound and sustainable.”

“We remain cautious and we critically review the budget monthly to ensure there is no deficit spending,” Parks states on her website.

“With my leadership we will continue to maintain a safe and clean community, provide available housing and workforce, good schools and with the reelection of Scott Matas, Jan Pye and myself we will have a stable local government.”

The final election results, which are being challenged, show voters ousting Parks in favor of Councilman Adam Sanchez.

Parks has told The Desert Sun she was “blindsided” by the news that shows the city will run out of money by March.

And what about the city’s account balances that were on her campaign site?

“We did when that was written,” Parks said.

Challenging the vote

In case you missed it, Parks announced last week that she’s seeking a recount.

The process, expected to take two days, could start as soon as this week.

It won’t just be the candidates watching the results.

If Sanchez wins, his seat will be filled by Councilwoman Pye, who campaigned with Parks but lost her own seat to newcomer Joe McKee.

“At this point, to me, I just said I would accept whatever,” said Pye, who would be off the council if Parks wins her challenge.

“Now, I’m in limbo. I don’t know if there should or should not be a recount.”

Changing the results via a recount is rare, according to an April 2011 study by the nonpartisan Center for Voting and Democracy.

Between 2000 and 2009, there were 2,884 statewide general elections and 18 statewide recounts. Eleven of them were deemed “consequential,” because the original margin of victory was less than 0.15 percent.

Only three of those “consequential” election results were overturned in the recount, the study found.

Overheard

Assemblyman V. Manuel Pérez has spent years recruiting Latino candidates from the east valley.

And the Coachella Democrat was quick to issue a formal statement Tuesday after the Coachella Valley Water District decided to abandon its at-large election system.

“I applaud the CVWD’s decision to adopt a by-district election system — it enables the district to avoid a potentially costly and lengthy lawsuit, while making an affirmative effort to address concerns raised by residents about fair representation for the communities it serves,” Pérez said in a statement.

“At the same time, it’s a positive step for Eastern Coachella Valley communities seeking to elevate and address many of the drinking water and wastewater infrastructure challenges they are experiencing.”

The water board’s decision came after civil rights attorneys argued the existing system was unfair to Latino residents. The new system will ensure board members are elected by voters of a single division.

Honored

The Rotary Club of Palm Springs recently honored U.S. Rep. Raul Ruiz with the Rotary Foundation Paul Harris Fellow award.

Ruiz, a Palm Desert Democrat and emergency room physician, was recognized for his humanitarian efforts.

Recent endorsements

- Former Assemblywoman Bonnie Garcia, a Republican running for the 28th Senate, is backed by Palm Desert Mayor Jan Harnik and Councilman Van Tanner.
- Indio Councilman Glenn Miller, a Republican running for the 28th Senate, is backed by the Hi-Lo Desert Golf Course Superintendents Association.

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