

## Desert Sun

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### Is city looking to replace Larson?

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By Cindy Uken

Corky Larson says she is "happy to leave" Desert Hot Springs as its city attorney - if that's what the City Council wants.

Larson served as city attorney until July, when she stepped down temporarily to become interim city manager, replacing Jerry Hanson, who resigned. Larson, one of the valley's most prominent political figures, (the county courthouse in Indio carries her name) was named city attorney for Desert Hot Springs in May 2004. She was planning to return to the attorney post once a permanent city manager was hired.

But there might be other plans for her, according to correspondence obtained by The Desert Sun. In a "personal and confidential" letter to Councilman Hank Hohenstein, John E. Brown, marketing partner for Best, Best and Krieger, said, "Jeff and I are anxious to sit down with you for dinner in the (near) future and talk. I do think we would be a great fit and I think Jeff and I could rally the 'legal team' left in place after Cork's departure."

Corky's departure? It's news to her - and to other City Council members.

"Whatever the council wants is fine with me," Larson said. "But I have chatted about coming back as city attorney on a part-time basis. Regardless, whether I stay or not, it is my understanding that there are hard feelings in Desert Hot Springs over BB&K's handling of the Silver Sage lawsuit."

And, she's right. There are.

#### Silver Sage conflict

The City Council dropped BB&K as its law firm after becoming disenchanted with the way it handled the Silver Sage lawsuit. The city's ordeal started in 1990 when its council rejected a proposal made by Los Angeles-based Silver Sage Partners Ltd. to buy an existing mobile home park on Pierson Boulevard and build 116 houses there for low-income families.

Silver Sage sued the city, claiming that some of the then-City Council members made discriminatory comments against Mexicans and blacks, who were expected to live in the planned housing complex, during their deliberation of the plan in official meetings.

A U.S. District Court in 2001 found that the city's 1990 decision to deny the housing project violated the Federal Fair Housing Act, leaving the city no other choice but to file its bankruptcy in December that year.

"I think (BB&K) dropped the ball numerous times," Councilman Gary Bosworth said. "We spent well over \$1 million in legal fees and ended up with a tremendous judgment against the city."

Brown will only say, "I can't tell you how much it galls me that I am actually constrained by the attorney/client privilege."

Whether there are hard feelings toward BB&K, there doesn't seem to be any ground-swell of support to look for another city attorney.