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Palm Springs, California

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**Questions around Hanson unanswered**

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Desert Hot Springs  
 By Erica Solvig and Bill Byron

The Desert Sun

The Riverside County Grand Jury ended its term Friday without issuing any more findings against Desert Hot Springs, leaving questions about former City Manager **Jerry Hanson's** contracts unanswered.

But it is possible that the civil grand jury, which operates in secret, could ask the next grand jury to continue looking at **Hanson's** earnings or any other issues not addressed in Thursday's report about the Coachella Valley community.

It is possible, but unlikely, that the 2006-07 grand jury could look at the issue.

"Often a grand jury will conclude its investigation with nothing more than a report and recommendation," said Tom Webb, attorney with the Palm Desert law office of Dale

GRIDOW.

"It's totally up to the incoming grand jury whether they want to do anything about it," said Jack Zepp, a retired attorney and legal affairs expert with the California Grand Jurors Association.

"It's neither typical nor unusual. ... But (the next jury) won't be starting from ground zero."

The grand jury on Thursday published five findings against Desert Hot Springs, citing ethical violations, accounting problems and improper hiring practices.

The findings, which are not criminal charges, came after at least three requests to the grand jury to look at the city's administration.

The five-page report did not name any city staffer. But some references to a "former city official" appear to be references to **Hanson**.

**Hanson**, who left the city in July 2005, was publicly scrutinized over his pay, property ownership and possible conflicts of interest. A Desert Sun investigation showed **Hanson** helped write his multiple contracts and used car allowances, vacation time and a severance package to boost his earnings to \$322,809 in 2004.

**Hanson** has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing.

The city has 90 days to respond to Thursday's report. Many of the grand jury's recommendations are already in place, officials said.

Other agencies, including the Riverside County District Attorney's Office and the Fair Political Practices Commission, also have been asked to investigate Desert Hot Springs.

Neither agency could confirm that any investigation is under way.

Friday marked the 2005-6 grand jury's last day. Nineteen residents are picked each July to serve a one-year term.

Will the next grand jury pick up any Desert Hot Springs issues after the 2005-06 grand jury closed the year with no report?

"In most instances that is where it ends" attorney Webb said.

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