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DHS group demands action

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Residents want city manager to go on leave during probe

By Jose Paul Corona

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DESERT HOT SPRINGS - A group of residents wants City Manager Jerry Hanson to be placed on administrative leave while conflict-of-interest charges are investigated.

"Jerry should take leave," Alex Bias, chairman of the city's Economic Development Commission, said Tuesday.

Hanson came under fire after it was learned last week that the Riverside office of Tyco Fire and Security, where Hanson's son, Justin, works, was awarded an \$8,600 city contract.

Hanson could not be reached for comment after attempts to call his office and cell phone Tuesday.

As Bias and Murray Rodkin voiced their concerns during an afternoon press conference, Dan Branstrom sat at a desk and stuffed several stacks of envelopes.

Inside the envelopes was a letter written by Bias and signed by Branstrom, Rodkin and Jim Kane, all residents of Desert Hot Springs.

More than 1,300 letters will be sent to registered voters in the city. The letter, which seeks to place Hanson on administrative leave pending an investigation, asks residents to return an enclosed card if they agree.

Bias said he's paying about \$700 for all costs dealing with the printing and mailing of the letters and postcards.

"Please call our mayor and City Council members to let them know how serious this matter is and support placing Jerry Hanson on immediate administrative leave," the letter states.

It goes on to say that "outside legal counsel" should spearhead the investigation and that Tracy Fuller, former director of administrative services and former finance director, should be appointed interim city manager.

Citing budget concerns, Hanson eliminated Fuller's position last week.

"She's an ex-city manager, she knows what it's all about," said Rodkin, an economic development commissioner.

"I think she's the only one capable of doing" the job, Bias added.

Bias recently started a recall attempt against Mayor Matt Weyuker, Councilman Greg Ruppert and Councilwoman Mary Stephens after they voted to extend their own terms by one year. Bias stopped the recall effort when the issue was dropped.

Council members have said that they approved the security contract in question unaware of the father-son relationship. The