

Desert Sun

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Page: B1

Hanson investigation continues

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City manager may not have reported personal income

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The Desert Sun

DESERT HOT SPRINGS - City Manager Jerry Hanson may have violated the city's ethics code by preparing a report for a resident and general contractor while he served as the city's public works director.

Hanson, who is being investigated on conflict of interest allegations stemming from another incident, would not return phone calls Friday.

A state licensed civil engineer, Hanson prepared a "fire burnout and structural damage" report for Omega Builders, a general building contractor based in Moreno Valley, and the owner of a building on Palm Drive.

Neither the owner nor the business could be reached for comment.

The report was prepared by "H-A and E: Architects and Engineers", signed by Hanson and dated Dec. 14, 2002. The address listed for the company is the same as Hanson's home address.

It is unclear if Hanson was paid to prepare the report.

According to the state attorney general's office, that working relationship potentially could be a conflict of interest.

The general principles of the state's conflict of interest laws "seek to prevent people from making decisions in their public capacity that benefit them personally," said Nathan Barankin, spokesman for the state attorney general's office.

According to the city's ethics code, "No employee shall engage in or accept private employment or render services for private interests when such employment or service is incompatible with the proper discharge of his or her official duties or would tend to impair independence or judgement or action in the performance of official duties."

The code also states that "no employee shall have a financial interest in any business or transaction or contract with the city or in the sale of real estate, materials, supplies, or services to the city, except as permitted in the conflict of interest statutes of the state."

According to Hanson's report, he visited the burned structure on three consecutive days in December while he served as the city's public works director. He determined the damaged property needed to undergo specific repairs to meet city codes.

A letter to the property owner, dated March 4, 2003, from the city's building inspector concurred with Hanson's findings and asked the owner to make the necessary repairs or demolish the structure.

In a phone interview Friday, former City Manager Joe Guzzetta said he didn't know of any similar circumstances while he was with the city. The inspections were conducted about a week after Guzzetta was fired.