



Council to release investigation results

DESERT HOT SPRINGS: Its meeting tonight will include findings in the conflict-of-interest issue.

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By GREGOR McGAVIN / The Press-Enterprise

PALM SPRINGS - The city of Desert Hot Springs has made great strides toward shedding its well-earned image of old as a bankrupt hub of high crime and political shenanigans, locals say.

But despite each forward step, the city is still plagued by a built-in tendency to shoot itself in the foot publicly, some of the people who live and work in this city of 17,000 say.

"It gives the city a black eye," Planning Commissioner Paul Allen said in a telephone interview.

Most recently, the city abandoned a plan to push municipal elections back for one year and is wrapping up an investigation into a possible conflict of interest by City Manager Jerry Hanson.

Those problems may seem slight in a town that dismissed an earlier city manager four years ago amid charges of nepotism and conflict of interest. But locals say it casts Desert Hot Springs in an undeservedly negative light.

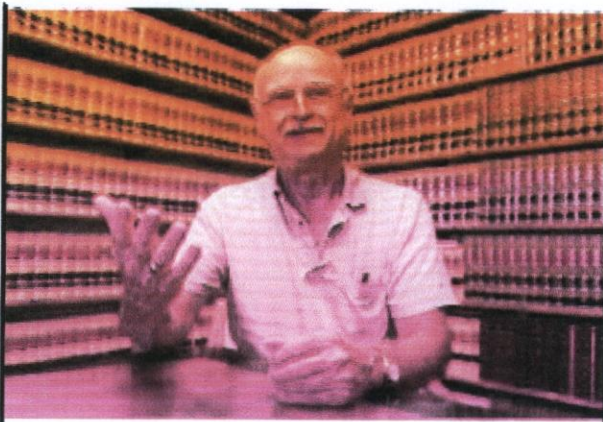
"It's very unhelpful for the city," said Dr. Tad Lonergan, a local family physician and staunch supporter of Hanson who credits the city manager and mayor with really "turning the city around."

"Finally we're coming into our own," he said by telephone, "but there is a fascinating tendency to shoot ourselves" in the foot.

Council Meeting
When: 6 p.m. today
Where: Carl May Community Center, 11-711 West Drive, Desert Hot Springs
Why it matters: The City Council is expected to make public the results of its investigation into



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Rodrigo Pena/The Press-Enterprise
Desert Hot Springs Planning
Commissioner Paul Allen says the
continued media coverage of the city's
political controversies is giving the city
a black eye.

public the results
of its investigation
-- and any action
to be taken -- at
tonight's City
Council meeting.

a possible conflict
of interest on the
part of City
Manager Jerry
Hanson.

Hanson did not
return a telephone call for comment. Mayor
Matt Weyuker said he could not comment on
personnel matters.

He did say, though, that "an awful lot (more)
has been made out of this" than should have
been.

Hanson, who took the job of city manager in
February, was the city's public works

director when Desert Hot Springs entered into an \$8,600 contract with a Riverside
security firm where Hanson's son works installing security cameras.

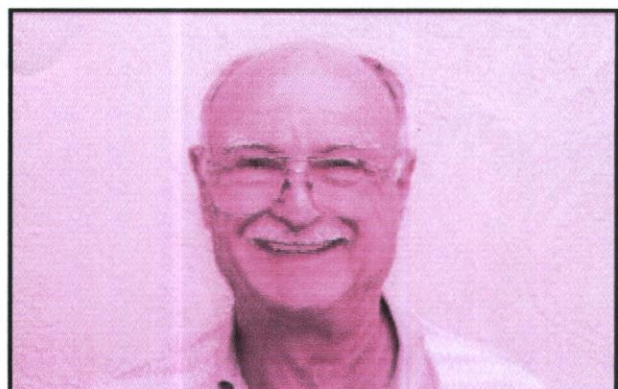
Allen and other officials said Hanson told then City Manager Sam Scott that his son
worked for the company, and no conflict was seen.

Now the city once again risks "returning to the old days, when Desert Hot Springs was a
laughingstock," Allen said.

John Wohlmuth, executive director of the
Coachella Valley Association of Governments,
would not comment on Hanson's case in
particular. But he said trust in local
government is a hard thing to earn.

"When that trust is lost, it becomes
extremely difficult and perhaps you do have a
bit of a target on your shirt," he said by
phone.

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