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Lack of challengers stuns Sweeney

Hayward mayor to run unopposed while six vie for two council seats

By Eric Kurhi

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HAYWARD — While two faces on the City Council will change following June's election, the city's top elected post will go unchallenged: No contenders filed nomination papers to run against Mayor Mike Sweeney as Friday's deadline passed.

"I have to admit I am surprised," said Sweeney, who said he hadn't been approached directly by any potential challengers, but had heard some were out there.

The fact that none surfaced could indicate people approve of his

city leadership, he said, though he added "there also may be some luck involved."

Sweeney has long been involved in Hayward politics. He was first elected to the City Council in 1982 and served as mayor from 1990 to 1994 before winning a state Assembly seat. He returned to Hayward politics in 2006, and received more than 58 percent of the vote to regain the mayor's office.

It's a different story for the two council seats.

With Anna May leaving to make a run for school board and Kevin Dowling in the county supervisor's race, the field is wide open. Six people had taken out nomination papers as of Friday. Because the incumbents are not seeking re-election, the deadline to file is extended to Wednesday.



Sweeney

Clerk's Office.

Educator and nonprofit manager Mark Salinas said he will file first thing Monday morning, while food-and-beverage broker Ralph Farias Jr., a 29-year-old newcomer to city politics, said he is "serious as a heart attack" about the race and has an appointment to file on Wednesday.

Business owner Steven Oiwa said he also would be filing papers next week, and Lawrence Fitzpatrick, a security officer who also has

Planning Commissioner Marvin Peixoto and Sara Lamnin, head of the city's Citizen's Advisory Commission, both turned in paperwork and are official candidates, according to the City

expressed interest in the school board, said he was still collecting the needed signatures on Friday.

Sweeney said he expects the biggest issues in coming years to be keeping the city budget balanced through hard economic times, and planned to keep the focus on citizen priorities such as public safety and "cleaning up and greening up Hayward."

He said that while his colleagues will be missed, he is looking forward to working with new council members.

"I think we're going to be sorry to see Kevin and Anna move on, but at the same time it creates the opportunity for some new leaders to emerge in the community," he said. "And that's a good thing."

The election will be held June 8.