

East Bay News 

Hercules voters to decide on recalls in election

Tuesday, June 07, 2011

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HERCULES -- Voters in Hercules will be deciding whether to recall Mayor Joanne Ward and City Councilman Donald Kuehne during a special election Tuesday.

Organizers of the recall effort say on their website that the need for the recall became clear when the Hercules City Council fired interim City Manager Charlie Long in December.

Recall proponents have argued that Long was fired for "revealing the truth about city financial woes," according to recall papers served on the council members in January.

Former mayor Ed Balico resigned in January moments before he too was served with recall papers.

The notices accuse Ward and Kuehne of "failed leadership" that has led to the "unprecedented financial crisis" the city is now facing.

According to the notices, the mayor and council members voted to approve multi-million dollar, no-bid contracts to a company owned by former City Manager Nelson Oliva's family and supported "sweetheart development deals that have depleted the city's redevelopment funds."

When Long was the city manager, he published weekly reports which allegedly revealed the city's negative financial condition, organizers said.

Kuehne could not be immediately reached for comment, but on his website, truthaboutherculesrecall.com, he claims that he is being blamed for things that happened before he was elected to the city council in 2008.

"In my first year on the City Council, I advocated independent audits of the City's budget and later I pushed for outside reviews of the City Manager," Kuehne said on his website. "I was confronted by a stone wall when I asked probing questions. I was told time and time again that all financial information could only come from the City Manager. I was shocked when the City Attorney said that the conflict-of-interest with the City Manager's daughters was legal!"

Ward also could not be immediately reached for comment.

She was elected to the city council in 2000 and is currently serving as mayor in her third consecutive four-year term, according to the city's website.

If Ward is recalled, voters will be choosing between William Wilkins, a retired real estate manager, and Virgilio De Le Vega, a business consultant, to replace her.

Business owner Gerard Boulanger is the only candidate running for Kuehne's seat.

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