



NEWS



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Hesperia Councilwoman Rebekah Swanson says work isn't finished, eyes 2nd term

Rene Ray De La Cruz, Victorville Daily Press

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Hesperia Councilwoman Rebekah Swanson, who represents District 1, is eyeing a second term on Nov. 3, 2020. Daily Press File Photo

After four years of representing the citizens of Hesperia, Councilwoman Rebekah Swanson said she's working toward a reelection bid in November because her work is not finished.

Swanson, 58, told the Daily Press that while the city has "a healthy budget" and "plans for improvement to our roads and highways and freeways," she added that the city is just starting to attract more jobs and provide "more than a bedroom community."

"I have more work to do to achieve those goals," she said.

Swanson won her seat in 2016 during the city's at-large election. A year later, she found herself representing District 1 after the council voted to switch to a by-district election system.

Her opponents this year include former Councilman Mike Leonard and businessman Anthony Rhoades.

Hesperia's by-district voting map includes five districts with about 18,000 residents per district.
Mission statement

Swanson's mission statement includes her desire to ensure the citizens of Hesperia stay safe via the city providing fire and police protection at current levels without raising taxes.

She said she wants to attract and keep residents in town by offering infrastructure, jobs and safe roads, and by attracting retail and health industries to the Victor Valley's second-largest city.

Swanson said she'll continue to support volunteers who help youth, seniors, animals and each other, "which is why Hesperia is the most desirable place to live in the Mojave River Valley."

Challenges facing Hesperia

Hesperia's biggest challenge, according to Swanson, is maintaining the status as the safest local community.

“Police and fire protection are at the highest levels of budgeting,” said Swanson, who added that she will not take funding away from the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s or **San Bernardino County Fire** departments.

The Fiscal Year 2020-21 budget includes \$17.4 million earmarked for law enforcement, up nearly \$900,000 over the previous year, according to the city.

Law enforcement services contracted through the Sheriff’s Department are the general fund’s largest expenditure and will increase approximately \$246,000 for each Sheriff’s deputy added. The cost also covers equipment and vehicles.

Measure N

The November ballot measure is designed to ensure sustainable and affordable water supply to the city if the measure passes. Its main points are the reduction to the number of homes, apartments and multi-family dwelling units per acre.

“First of all, there is no research that suggests that forcing people to build on a lot of 13,000 square feet and no less will save water,” Swanson said. “I asked at the time for this research that proves this, and was told there was none. So I believe this wording is deliberately deceptive.”

Swanson said the measure cannot go into effect until 2025 at the soonest, so she doesn't understand the urgency to have the measure go to the voters before any research is done about how it will affect the city’s ability to be able to provide services without raising taxes, which she is unwilling to do.

“We have ordinances and zoning that are appropriate to different areas of our city, and it is not logical to require an entire city in excess of 75 square miles to be zoned only one way,” Swanson said. “We change zoning depending on needs; this measure will stop future councils from making better zoning decisions depending on the changing requirements of those who wish to add businesses or housing to our community.”

Swanson said it’s possible that the measure may be deliberately worded to benefit one developer over others, “And with that, I do not agree,” she said.

“When the voters were presented with Proposition 6, it was worded deceptively to hide the fact that it was the repeal of the gas tax,” Swanson said. “I feel the wording of this (measure) will deceive our residents into thinking that they will save water if they vote yes. My vote is no.”

Campaign finances funding

From July through mid-Sept, Swanson filed campaign contribution forms showing she received contributions of \$500 from Best Way Disposal in Hesperia and the Building Industry Association of Southern California.

“I am accepting donations from anyone who wants to see Hesperia stay a safe community and who has seen how I carefully weigh and research decisions that make the best choices for my city moving forward,” Swanson said.

Best Way Disposal is the legal name of Advance Disposal, the waste management company located on Mesa Street in Hesperia, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Political and work experience

Swanson first ran for and won a seat on the Hesperia Recreation and Park District in 2006. She was reelected and then ran for an open City Council seat in 2016.

In 1985, she was hired as a teacher by the Hesperia Unified School District, the same district where her husband, Eric Swanson, serves as board president.

“I also have a small business with my family that provides internet solutions for small companies, and has recently branched out into video production,” Swanson said.

Controversy

Swanson’s time on the dais has not been without controversy. During a council meeting on July 22, Councilwoman Brigit Bennington made several allegations against Swanson, including her revealing “extremely sensitive” items discussed during one closed session.

Bennington also accused Swanson of being more concerned about the building industry “making money off our city, the same ones who support your campaign, many of whom do not live in our community.”

Swanson said she denied the allegations made by Bennington and was surprised her fellow City Council member would speak out against her.

Education and personal information

Swanson earned an associate's degree from Grossmont Community College, a bachelor's degree from Point Loma College and a master's from Point Loma Nazarene University.

She has lived in Hesperia for over 30 years. She and her husband have two adult children, Will and Julia.

<https://www.vvdailypress.com/story/news/2020/10/18/hesperia-council-rebekahswanson-election-highdesert/5974299002/>