

# Recall petitions head to election commission



Ron Littlefield



Jack Benson



Manny Rico

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Organizers attempting to oust Mayor Ron Littlefield say they have enough signatures to start his recall.

If a required 9,000 or more recall signatures are verified as registered Chattanooga voters by the Hamilton County Election

Commission, a special mayoral election will coincide with the Nov. 2 general election.

Littlefield would have the option of staying in office until the election, though he could resign if the recall is verified, said Charlotte Mullis-Morgan, Hamilton County's administrator of elections. She said that any

recalled official has the option of running in special recall elections.

Chattanooga Organized for Action announced that more than 3,000 signatures will be turned in today to add to an estimated 6,700 already filed with the Hamilton County Election Commission.

Mullis-Morgan said unless a large number of extra signatures, which are due by Aug. 30, are turned in that the recall totals would be confirmed by the middle of next week.

"We check every signature, we check every address, we make sure they're registered vot-

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# Recall

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ers and we make sure they are who they say," she said.

Littlefield spokesman Richard Beeland said the mayor is waiting for the official totals before saying if he would run in a special election or not.

"We'll just have to wait and see how it plays out," he said.

Chris Brooks, a lead organizer for Chattanooga Organized for Action, said it's "inevitable" that some signatures will not be verified, which is why he and others are attempting to gather extra signatures before the deadline.

"Again and again and again, we find that the politicians in power, the people that we elect to represent us, are stonewalling citizens, groups who wish to participate in the process, and are circling the

## HOW IT WORKS

Petitioners have until Aug. 30 to turn in extra signatures. Election officials will then count and certify the signatures. If there are enough, Mayor Ron Littlefield, Councilman Jack Benson and Councilman Manny Rico will be up for re-election in a special election that coincides with the Nov. 2 general election. They have the option of resigning before then.

bandwagon to protect their own," he said.

Along with Brooks' group, the Chattanooga Tea Party and Citizens to Recall Ron Littlefield are spearheading recall efforts of not only Littlefield, but also City Councilman Manuel Rico and Jack Benson.

For a recall on Rico, 450 verified signatures from voters in his district must be obtained, Mullis-Morgan

said, adding for Benson, it will take 750. Required numbers are calculated from vote totals in the previous election, she said.

A "formal campaign" to accumulate those signatures also was announced Tuesday by organizers.

May's announcement of a 33 percent property tax increase, three open records requests that "took months," land deals among politicians and "overall corruption and lack of transparency" are among reasons Brooks cited for the recall efforts on Littlefield, Rico and Benson.

"(Rico and Benson) will be pretty easy to remove," Brooks said. "We're just focusing all our time on (Littlefield) right now."

Rico responded to the recall effort in an open letter Tuesday, calling recall organizers a "small, vocal minority of citizens in Chattanooga."

"I feel it is unfortunate that I must preserve my

elected office and focus my time defending my actions to a few ... instead of doing what you, the voters, elected me to do — support the goals and needs of our district," the letter reads.

Last week, Rico said he would not seek re-election if recalled. But after an "outpouring of support and encouragement," he said will run in the case of a recall election.

Benson called the accusations against him "generic charges that could be against anybody in office." He said he also plans on running for re-election in the event of a recall.

"Oh, I enjoy campaigning," he said. "I'm looking forward to it if it does come down to that, getting out and meeting the people and seeing if they want me to represent them."



**Online:** View the announcement from organizers. Read Councilman Rico's response to the recall. Read previous stories.