

San Bernardino police chief candidate list down to two

By Jesse B. Gill, Staff Writer

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SAN BERNARDINO - The search for the next San Bernardino police chief has been narrowed from a list of about 30 candidates down to two men, according to several sources.

Mayor Pat Morris began an exhaustive search for the next police chief in March when Keith Kilmer announced he would retire after a little more than two years at the post.

One of the candidates is Camarino Sanchez, chief of the Santa Barbara Police Department, said Felix D'Amico, chairman of the San Bernardino Police Commission. "I know that it's two people, one from Santa Barbara and another one from Arizona," D'Amico said.

The "one from Arizona" is Commander Robert Handy from the Phoenix Police Department, according to Mark Spencer of the Phoenix Law Enforcement Association, and another source from the Phoenix Police Department.

When reached by phone Thursday, Handy would neither confirm nor deny that he was still in the running for the San Bernardino top cop job. "I can't comment on any city's police chief process," Handy said.

Sanchez did not return a phone message seeking comment Thursday afternoon.

While sources outside City Hall confirmed both names, city officials neither confirmed nor denied that either man is a finalist for the job.

Jim Morris, Mayor Morris' son and chief of staff, refused to confirm that Sanchez and Handy are finalists. He said the mayor's office is "not authorized" to release the names of the candidates.

"In the initial phases of interviewing, we honor the candidates' requests to keep their names from public disclosure," he said. The remaining candidates still have to go through the final stages of a vetting process before the mayor will name the new police chief, Jim Morris said. "We are still in the process of whittling down the finalists," he said.

The mayor's recruitment process ended in June, with about 30 possible candidates for the police chief job, he said. Those candidates then had to go through rigorous background investigations and a multi-tiered interview process, where they sat before several community panels.

One panel included other local police chiefs, Jim Morris said. Another included community leaders.

The process is nearing its end, he said. The mayor could soon be seeking a final recommendation from the City Council.

"We have about another month before some kind of final action," he said.