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Metro

Mayor William Lantigua seeking recount in race

Lawrence mayor cites wishes of supporters

By [Maria Cramer](#), [Jeremy C. Fox](#) and [Matt Rocheleau](#) | GLOBE STAFF | GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS NOVEMBER 10, 2013

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JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

Lawrence Mayor William Lantigua.

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Lawrence Mayor William Lantigua said Sunday he will seek a recount after losing the Nov. 5 mayoral election by 57 votes, according to his lawyer.

His challenger, City Councilor Daniel Rivera, has urged the mayor to concede the race. But Lantigua's lawyer, Sal Tabit, said the margin is too slim to feel certain about the outcome. More than 15,000 ballots were cast and more than 260 had to be counted by hand when voting machines in some precincts broke, Tabit said.

"We just want to make sure that every vote is accounted for," he said. "That's why there is this process, because there are close elections. At this point, [Lantigua's] supporters are really encouraging him to exhaust every effort to make sure that the vote is accurate."

Lantigua could not immediately be reached for comment Sunday and his voice mail box was full, but he

posted a statement in Spanish on his Facebook page saying he had received thousands of calls from people disappointed in the process and demanding he ask for a recount.

In the statement to his supporters, whom he called his “dear family,” Lantigua said he was doing this for the “thousands of working men and women who cast their vote with the hope that our work would continue for the next four years. They must be satisfied that they participated in a fair and clean process.”

He continued, saying that “if the results do not favor our candidacy, we will be the first in accepting the results and will offer our support for the good of our community.”

He ended his statement quoting Martin Luther King, Jr.: “The time is always right to do what’s right.”

Tabit said the mayor is tired after a trying campaign.

“It’s difficult for both candidates,” he said. “Everyone has campaigned extremely hard, a lot of sleepless nights, and to have something come down to less than half of 1 percent of the vote is taxing.”

Rivera led Lantigua by 60 votes in the unofficial count announced after Tuesday’s election and then came out 57 votes ahead after a review of provisional ballots Friday.

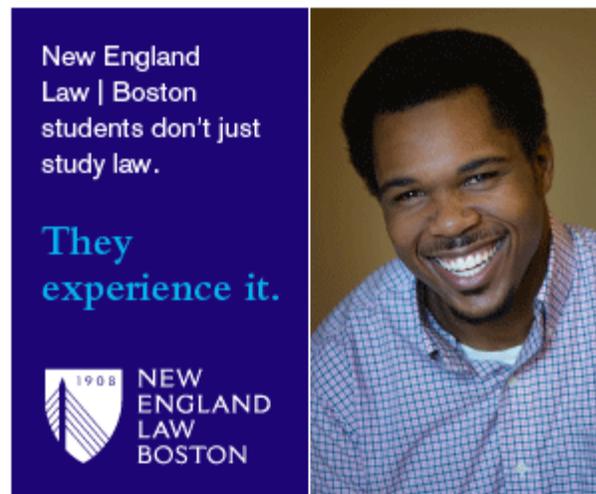
Lantigua was elected in 2009 as the state’s first Latino mayor. He has won praise for balancing the budget and fixing some of the city’s streets, but his term has been marred by criminal investigations.

Though Lantigua has not been charged in any crimes, three of his allies were indicted on state corruption charges, and another was convicted in federal court of bribery, lying to a federal agent, and obstruction of justice.

In the September primary, Lantigua won 48 percent of the vote, with Rivera far behind in the six-way race with 23 percent.

In a phone interview Sunday, Rivera expressed disappointment that Lantigua had chosen to keep the city “on pause” while residents await a resolution.

“It’s too bad, because the mayor had an opportunity for a leadership moment where he could have brought this community together,” he said. “What we know of [Lantigua] is that he will do whatever is in his best interest despite the best interests of the city.”



Rivera said he had already asked Secretary of State William F. Galvin to oversee any potential recount, to ensure the integrity of the process. Galvin's office supervised the general election in the city.

"We fought for every vote, and we're going to fight to protect every vote," Rivera said. "We're going to make sure [Lantigua] doesn't try to run roughshod on the process of a recount."

One longtime Lawrence political observer, who has not publicly backed either candidate, said he did not think Lantigua's prospects were promising.

Ronald F. Martin, 73, has worked in city agencies, served on municipal boards, and participated in political campaigns in Lawrence for five decades. Currently a licensing board member, Martin said he has closely followed city politics since he was a boy.

"There's been a good number of recounts over the years," in Lawrence, Martin said in a phone interview Sunday. "But, I've never seen any for major office overturned because of a recount."

He said it was unlikely that Lantigua could buck precedent.

"It's under 100 votes. It's within the realm of possibility," said Martin. "But, it's very difficult to overcome a deficit that large."

But, he said, he does not blame Lantigua for asking for the recount.

"[The recount] is not a big deal. I don't feel like it will hurt the city," said Martin. "If the situation was reversed, the others would be clamoring for a recount."

As Rivera awaits a final resolution, he will continue to assemble his transition team and prepare to take office in January, he said.

"Everybody needs to know that Lawrence is back in business," Rivera said.

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