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Escondido trustee to fight DA felony charges

By PAT MAIO

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VISTA — Escondido Union School District Trustee Jose Fragozo pleaded not guilty in state court on Thursday to 13 felonies linked to allegations that he misrepresented his place of residence to get elected.

“It’s unfortunate — and he’s very disappointed — that the public’s money is being spent on this kind of investigation that we believe is going to lead to full exoneration,” said Victor Manuel Torres, Fragozo’s attorney.

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Escondido Union School District Trustee Jose Fragozo, right, listens as his attorney V reasons for pleading not guilty to 13 felonies linked to allegations that he misrepresented elected. (Pat Maio / Pat Maio)

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He said his client “looks forward to his day in court” where all the evidence will be heard.

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Superior Court Judge James A. Mangione set a preliminary hearing date of March 23. A readiness hearing to see if the parties are ready to go to trial was set for March 9.

If convicted of all charges, the 50-year old Fragozo faces a maximum sentence of nine years and four months in prison.

A complaint over Fragozo’s residency was first filed with the Secretary of State’s Office in 2012, when Fragozo ran for a seat on the elementary school district board. That same year the district changed from electing board members on an at-large basis to electing

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an apartment at 305 South Maple St., which he listed as his : **SUBSCRIBE** ed
his voter registration form July 14, 2012, two days before he ~~filed his nomination~~ and
declaration of candidacy papers.

Fragozo also owns a four-bedroom, 3,600-square-foot home in the school district at
28346 Crooked Oak Lane, in the Hidden Meadows neighborhood. He said he is
separated from his wife and that she remains in the Hidden Meadows home while he
lives at the South Maple Street apartment.

The South Maple Street apartment is in Escondido's Area 1, a heavily Latino
neighborhood that Fragozo was elected to represent. The Crooked Oak Lane home is in
Area 5, a district that is less influenced by the Latino vote.

The charges against Fragozo include false voter registration; perjury; filing false
nomination papers declaring candidacy; voting Nov. 6, 2012, in his Escondido trustee
election when not entitled to vote; voting again in elections in June and November 2014
when not entitled; and filing false state economic disclosure forms in 2014 and 2015 in
which he falsely declared his South Maple Street address as his mailing address.

It is not illegal for an elected official to have more than one home, but California law
says candidates have to live in the districts they seek to represent.

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