

Nizhny Mayor Ousted

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The Nizhny Novgorod city legislature elected local businessman Oleg Sorokin as mayor on Monday after incumbent Vadim Bulavinov removed his candidacy, conceding defeat in a political battle with the regional governor, who did not approve his reappointment.

Bulavinov, who became mayor in 2002 and won re-election in 2005, supported the abolishment of direct mayoral elections last year.

Sorokin, a reported protege of Governor Valery Shantsev, will split governing duties with a city manager, who will be hired at a public tender in the coming weeks.

Shantsev and Bulavinov are both members of United Russia, which controls the city legislature.

“This shows again that United Russia is not a strong party worth anything because a battle is going between its own rank and file,” said Alexander Kynev, a regional politics expert at the Foundation for Information Policy Development, a think tank.

“While we don't have free elections anymore, Bulavinov has lost a battle in government

infighting,” Kynev said by telephone.

He added that Bulavinov, who is popular with Nizhny Novgorod residents, made a crucial mistake when he supported the ban on direct mayoral elections.

Sorokin, a real estate developer who survived an attempt on his life by a local lawmaker, Alexander Dikin, in 2007, has regularly clashed with Bulavinov's administration in the past, accusing City Hall of creating a poor business environment in Nizhny Novgorod.

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