

## Varlamov Exits Omsk Race

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Ilya Varlamov, seated at right, at a meeting of civic group the League of Voters in January.

Popular photo blogger Ilya Varlamov has closed his unlikely campaign for the post of mayor of Omsk, saying he would not have time to collect the necessary 10,000 signatures to get on the ballot before the deadline, May 7.

In a fitting end to the mayoral run by a candidate made popular by his online presence, Varlamov announced that he was quitting the race in a blog post on his LiveJournal page.

"Unfortunately, today at 21:15 the Omsk headquarters and I decided to close the campaign," Varlamov wrote late Wednesday. (Read our [feature](#) on Varlamov's mayoral run.)

He said his campaign had discovered that about half the 3,000 signatures they had collected were fraudulent. He said his corps of volunteers had been averaging about 400 "honest" signatures a day.

Varlamov accused the other candidates of using fake signatures, implying that the only way to collect 10,000 signatures in six days was to pay people to write in false ones.

The blogger entered the Omsk race early last month after receiving an invitation from a local opposition activist belonging to a group calling itself Citizen Mayor.

The campaign left the aspiring candidate with positive impressions of the Siberian city and of his campaign workers.

"But it was very cool. The people who ran the campaign are very cool, and the moment will come some day when they will become stronger than the f\*\*\*ing mire. Unfortunately, not today and not in Omsk," Varlamov wrote.

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