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Sobyanin Could Stand Down as Mayor to Run for Re-election in September

By The Moscow Times

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Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin could resign from his post Tuesday and run for re-election as early as September, a news report said.

The move will allow President Vladimir Putin to make Sobyanin the acting head of the city. Sobyanin will then be able to run in the mayoral election, which now appears likely to take place on Sept. 8, 2013, a source told RIA-Novosti.

The elections had been set to take place in 2015.

Calling an early election would give Sobyanin a significant advantage over his rivals, including Civic Platform party leader Mikhail Prokhorov, as it would give them only two months to prepare their campaigns.

Anti-corruption blogger Alexei Navalny told Ekho Moskvy Tuesday that he is also planning

to run for mayor.

In February the Sobyanin told Kommersant that calling an early election would be "inappropriate."

Sobyanin has approval ratings of 54 percent, according to an opinion poll conducted by the Institute of Social Systems at Lomonosov Moscow State University. The same poll suggests that Prokhorov currently has an approval rating of just 12 percent.

Members of Sobyanin's cabinet have not yet been officially informed about his possible departure and only news reports have been forthcoming, an source in the Moscow city government told Interfax.

Sobyanin, who was elected governor of the oil-rich Tyumen region, is expected to meet with President Putin Tuesday, Vedomosti reported.

A former presidential administration official, Sobyanin was nominated for the post of the city mayor in 2010 by then-President Dmitry Medvedev to replace the long-standing mayor Yuri Luzhkov.

While mayors in Russia are elected, the heads of Moscow and St. Petersburg, which have governor status, have been nominated to their posts since the gubernatorial elections were

abolished in 2004.

They were then reinstalled in 2012.

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