



HRD | HUMAN
RESOURCES
DEPARTMENT



Municipal Court Judge Appointments

Presentation to Public Safety Committee | November 2021

Purpose



- December 31, 2021 – Term expiration of current judges within Municipal Court
 - Presiding Judge
 - Associate Judges
 - Downtown Community Court Judge
 - Substitute Judges
- Update on the steps to date and consider recommended Judges seeking reappointment or candidates seeking appointment

Qualifications



- Judges must:
 - Be a U.S. Citizen
 - Live within the city limits the two (2) years prior to application
 - Have two (2) years' experience in the practice of law in the State of Texas
 - Be in good standing with the state bar

Process



- ✓ Ask sitting judges for a letter of interest
 - ✓ Confirm judges continue to meet qualifications for the position
 - ✓ Judges indicate which position they prefer – Associate, Substitute, Night Magistrate
- ✓ Evaluate potential vacancies
- ✓ Presiding Judge identifies members of a Judicial Review Panel to recommend to the Public Safety Committee (PSC)
- ✓ Human Resources Department (HRD) posts vacancies
- ✓ Judicial Review Panel reviews letters of interest from sitting judges and applications for vacant positions
- Judicial Review Panel recommends judges to the PSC
- Public Safety Committee recommends judges to the City Council
- December 2021: City Council appoints judges to a four-year term – January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2025

Judicial Review Panel (JRP)

- JRP members were contacted and a meeting was convened by the Presiding Judge
- Memorandum on the process, status, and JRP members sent on September 9, 2021
- 2021 JRP Members:
 - Betty Blackwell, Criminal Law Attorney
 - Lucio A. Del Toro, First Assistant, Travis County Attorney's Office
 - Karly Jo Dixon, Managing Attorney, Texas Fair Defense Project
 - Leah Downey-Gallatin, Staff Attorney, Travis County Courts at Law
 - Joshua Griggers, Sergeant – Robbery Unit, APD
 - Aaron Mueller, Criminal Law Attorney
 - Margaret Chen Kercher, Criminal Law Attorney
 - Amber Vasquez, Criminal Law Attorney
 - Sidney Williams, Criminal Law Attorney
 - Dana Weis, Solo-practice Criminal Law Attorney



Timeline 2021



Week/Date	Task
July 19 ✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Court/HRD updates PSC on the Judicial process • Reviews the JRP with the PSC
July 26 – August 6 ✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Court collects letters of intent from current judges, compile mid- and end- of term evaluations; creates files for each judge including evaluations and other pertinent information • Assemble JRP
August 9 – September 7 ✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRD begin formal advertisement • Positions posted on niche websites, social media, and with local bar and criminal defense organizations
September 8 – 24 ✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRD screens applications • Meeting with JRP is scheduled to review applications and letters of intent

Timeline 2021 Continued



Week/Date	Task
Week of September 27 ✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRD hosts screening session with JRP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JRP screens and ranks the top qualified applicants • JRP recommends the individuals to meet with the panel • HRD coordinates scheduling all candidates, including current Judges
Week of October 4 ✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JRP conducts interviews and recommends top candidates for PSC approval
November 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSC reviews hiring recommendation from JRP; • PSC can determine whether to meet with any sitting Judge if not recommended for appointment • Select JRP members are available to discuss recommendations with PSC • PSC recommends candidates to the City Council for approval
December 2 or 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Council approves judges for new term • Law drafts ordinance

Screening & Interviews



- The JRP reviewed sitting judges and applicants
- JRP evaluated the candidates and have a recommendation for the PSC

Today

- PSC will review the recommendation from the JRP
- The PSC may accept the recommendation or conduct additional interviews

Questions?

