

October 26, 2011 in City

Commissioners pick new judge

Randy Brandt to fill vacant District Court judgeship

John Craig

A former Spokane County District Court commissioner will join the bench as a judge.

Randy Brandt, currently a state administrative law judge, was unanimously appointed Tuesday by county commissioners to replace Judge Richard White, who retired July 1.

"I felt like he hit a home run in the interview process," Commissioner Mark Richard said in his nomination of Brandt.

Richard cited Brandt's "extensive experience," "wealth of knowledge" and breadth of community service.

Commissioners Todd Mielke and Al French said attorney Richard Leland also stood out in interviews. French said he hoped someday to see "a black robe on Mr. Leland, too."

Brandt, 59, served as a District Court commissioner for six years before being laid off in December 2009 after Spokane decided to create its own municipal court instead of contracting with the county court.

Mielke said Brandt's experience will allow him to "pull his weight almost immediately" on a court that expects two of its seven sitting judges to take extended leaves soon for military and medical reasons.

Brandt is to join the court Nov. 16.

"We applaud your choice," Judge Sara Derr told commissioners. "Mr. Brandt has worked with us in the past and always has been very collegial. We look forward to working with him again."

Nineteen Spokane-area lawyers applied for the appointment, and county commissioners interviewed nine of them for the \$141,710-a-year job. District courts primarily handle traffic tickets, misdemeanor criminal offenses and small claims cases, but its judges also can issue protection orders and search warrants.

Commissioners were looking for a couple of things that Brandt offered in spades.

One was willingness to embrace digital case management. Brandt consulted notes from a laptop computer as he described his technological experience.

Commissioners also wanted someone they believe can defend the seat successfully in next year's general election. Brandt presented a 40-year list of activities that put him in contact with the community. He is a lay minister, a funeral director and a Habitat for Humanity volunteer.