

## Panel rates lawyers seeking judgeship

John Craig

A bar association committee says five lawyers who want to replace Spokane District Court Judge Richard White are exceptionally qualified.

Four of 18 applicants seeking the appointment by county commissioners are well qualified, eight are qualified and one isn't, according to the 11-member Judicial Evaluation Panel of the Spokane County Bar Association.

After interviewing the applicants, the committee said former District Court Judge Harvey Dunham is not qualified for the job.

Dunham, who couldn't be reached for comment, failed to win election after appointment to the bench in 2005. He lost again last year when he ran for a seat on the Court of Appeals.

White retired July 1. Spokane County commissioners will appoint his replacement.

According to the bar committee, attorneys Chris Bugbee, Donald Kellman, Richard Leland, Julie McKay and Robert Seines, a longtime District Court commissioner who was laid off, are exceptionally qualified.

Another laid-off court commissioner, Brad Chinn, was listed as well qualified. Also in that category were Gloria Ochoa and deputy prosecutors Mark Laiminger and Michael Nelson.

The bar committee said laid-off Commissioner Randy Brandt and attorneys Michael Beyer, David Hubert, Debby Kurbitz, Tim O'Brien, W. Michael Reinken, Lynden Smithson and Gregory Weber are qualified.

Hubert and Kurbitz work in the prosecutor's office and O'Brien is the county's labor relations director.

Each of the county commissioners is to prepare a short list of candidates next week, from which they will select about a half-dozen finalists Sept. 29.

The finalists are to be interviewed Oct. 19 and 20, and commissioners will deliberate and possibly make a decision Oct. 24.