

COLUMBIA BASIN HERALD

New judge to be appointed in 2 weeks

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**By Connor Vanderweyst,
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EPHRATA - A new Grant County District Court judge will be announced in the next two weeks.

County Commissioner Richard Stevens stated the three finalists who interview recently all did well and a decision will be made soon.

The three finalists for the position, all from Moses Lake, are district court Commissioner Brian Barlow, Deputy Prosecutor Tyson Hill and Attorney Nick Wallace, senior partner at the Ephrata law firm Schultheis Tabler and Wallace.

Stevens stated the new judge will start sometime in the summer. He confirmed the judge will not start until after July 1 and estimated an August start time following delays to the renovation of the new courtroom in the Moses Lake district court office on Wheeler Road.

Stevens said they also want to give the new appointee time to finish other business matters during the transition.

County Commissioners Stevens, Cindy Carter and Carolann Swartz agreed to fund a third judge because of the increasing number of district court cases.

The commissioners were able to find funding in the budget because the new judge won't start until the year is more than halfway complete, Stevens said. Stevens doesn't know how the new position will affect the county's finances in the future because the budget is done on a year-by-year basis.

Currently, Grant County's two district court judges and the court commissioner process more than 30,000 cases a year.

The new judge will join Rich Fitterer and Janis Whitener-Moberg on the district bench and serve until the 2014 general election, when the position will be on the ballot for a full four-year term.

Barlow, 52, worked at the Moses Lake law firm Earl and Earl for 11 years. For the last five years, he has served as the district court commissioner. He attended the University of Idaho and Brigham Young University Law School.

Hill, 33, served as a law clerk for state Supreme Court Justice Jim Johnson for one year before joining the Grant County Prosecutor's Office in July 2009. Hill graduated from Brigham Young University and attended law schools at Seattle University and the University of Washington.

Wallace, 46, has worked at Schultheis, Tabler and Wallace since 1996. In 2009, he became the managing partner. Wallace has also served as a pro-tem superior court commissioner for the past six years. Wallace is a Washington State University graduate and received his law degree from Seattle University.