

Pierce County Council taps deputy prosecutor for judgeship

The Pierce County Council recommended deputy prosecutor Kevin McCann on Tuesday to fill a vacant judgeship in District Court.

STEVE MAYNARD; STAFF WRITER

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The Pierce County Council recommended deputy prosecutor Kevin McCann Tuesday to fill a vacant judgeship in District Court.

The council voted 5-2 for McCann from a field of six finalists.

Council members Connie Ladenburg and Rick Talbert, both Tacoma Democrats, dissented. The council is scheduled to formally appoint McCann July 2.

McCann would fill the seat vacated last year by Judge Jack Nevin, who moved to Pierce County Superior Court.

Council Chairwoman Joyce McDonald, R-Puyallup, and council member Dan Roach, R-Bonney Lake, both cited McCann's prospect of winning an election to the bench in 2014.

McCann, 44, has been a deputy prosecutor for Pierce County for 17 years and a judge pro tem for 10 years. He ran unsuccessfully for District Court judge in 2010.

"I'm honored that they would choose me over a panel of very, very well-qualified candidates," he said.

The County Council interviewed McCann and five other candidates Tuesday:

- Robert Freeby, a defense attorney.
- Drew Henke, an administrative law judge.

- Grace Kingman, a deputy prosecutor.
- G. Helen Whitener, a defense attorney and former deputy prosecutor.
- Karl Williams, a University Place attorney.

Whitener and Williams have served as pro tem judges in District Court.

Talbert and many from the public who commented spoke in support of appointing either Whitener or Williams in part to put an African American on the District Court bench. Talbert said he favored either of those two to “give the bench a little bit of a different flavor.”

The position pays \$141,000 annually. The court’s eight judges handle more than 175,000 cases per year, primarily misdemeanors and traffic violations.

An ad-hoc committee appointed by the County Council chose Kingman, McCann and Whitener as its “top tier” choices from 17 applicants.

The Tacoma-Pierce County Bar Association rated McCann, Whitener and Williams as exceptionally well qualified.

The Pierce County Minority Bar Association rated Freeby, Henke, Kingman and Whitener as exceptionally well qualified.

In November, the council appointed Prosecuting Attorney Mark Lindquist to the ad-hoc committee, overriding objections from the legal community that the selection gave Lindquist unfair influence. A deputy prosecutor represented Lindquist on the panel.

While he had Lindquist’s support, McCann said Tuesday he’d like to believe he was selected judge based on his own qualifications and accomplishments.

Steve Maynard: 253-597-8647

steve.maynard@thenewstribune.com