

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****November 7, 2023**

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**SUBJECT: CHIEF JUDGE JUDICIAL RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS**

The purpose of this Informal Report is to share with the Mayor and City Council the proposed formal process to recruit, interview, and recommend appointment of a new Chief Judge to the City Council due to Chief Judge Danny Rodgers' retirement; effective December 29, 2023.

**Background**

Chapter 30 of the Texas Government Code (the Uniform Municipal Courts of Record Act) sets out the requirements for appointment of Judges and the Presiding Judge for Municipal Courts of Record. Section 30.00006(b) of the Texas Government Code requires the governing body of a municipality to appoint its Municipal Court Judges by ordinance.

The Fort Worth, Texas Cod of Ordinances states in Chapter VII: Municipal Court:

**§ 3 APPOINTMENT AND REMOVAL OF MUNICIPAL JUDGES.**

The chief judge and associate judges shall be selected and appointed by majority vote of all the members of the city council to serve specified terms. Initial appointment and reappointment to any term is at the sole discretion of the city council.

**Proposed Process**

The Chief Judge will be responsible for implementing and managing the process once approved by the Mayor and City Council and will work collaboratively with the City Manager's Office and Human Resources on process execution.

**Judicial Appointment Process—**

- Post the Chief Judge position through the Human Resources Department – position will be posted for two (2) weeks
- Posting will be open to internal as well as external candidates – must hold a JD and be licensed or eligible to be licensed to practice law in the State of Texas, must have practiced law for a minimum of two years and be in good standing with the State Bar of Texas.

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- Post position on a broad range of job posting services including but not limited to the State Bar of Texas, the Texas Municipal Court Association, the Tarrant County Bar Association, Tarrant County Black Bar Association, Hispanic Bar Association, TML, National League of Cities, etc.
- Once posting is closed, HR will review the applicants to eliminate applicants that do not meet the minimum criteria and posted requirements
- Pool of persons meeting all of the posted requirements would be shared with the Chief Judge
- Chief Judge will work with CMO and HR to convene a panel to screen the eligible applicant packets. The panel will select and invite a group of candidates to participate in the interview process with the objective of selecting 4-6 eligible candidates. Panel members may include the Chief Judge, Council Member, Assistant City Manager, Director of Municipal Court, a representative from the Diversity and Inclusion Department and other appropriate personnel.
- Interviews – Led by the Chief Judge, the panel may include the Court Director, a representative of the City Manager’s office, as well as Directors from other departments and other appropriate personnel.
- Share results of interviews with the City Manager prior to going to a council meeting to coordinate for presentation to the Mayor and Council.
- The Chief Judge will provide a hiring recommendation to the full City Council for their consideration and vote to appoint a new chief judge and set compensation
- M & C process to complete the chief judge appointment

**Interim Chief Judge Appointment**

Chief Judge Rodgers is recommending that Deputy Chief Judge Simon Gonzales serve as the Interim Chief Judge effective January 1, 2024, in the event that the chief judge process has not



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been completed by that date. The job description for the Deputy Chief Judge encompasses fulfilling the Chief Judge in the event such as this.

For questions regarding this information, please contact Chief Judge Danny Rodgers, at [James.Rodgers@fortworthtexas.gov](mailto:James.Rodgers@fortworthtexas.gov) or Valerie Washington at [Valerie.washington@fortworthtexas.gov](mailto:Valerie.washington@fortworthtexas.gov)

**David Cooke  
City Manager**