



WASHOE COUNTY

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STAFF REPORT

BBOARD MEETING DATE: November 14, 2023

DATE: October 11, 2023

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Kate Thomas, Assistant County Manager
775-328-2008, kathomas@washoecounty.gov

THROUGH: Eric P. Brown, County Manager

SUBJECT: Recommendation for the Board of County Commissioners to appoint Katheryn Hickman as the Washoe County Alternate Public Defender effective December 26, 2023, with an annual salary of \$211,120. (All Commission Districts.) FOR POSSIBLE ACTION

SUMMARY

On May 31, 2023, Alternate Public Defender Marc Picker provided his retirement notice effective January 26, 2024. Following the Board of County Commissioner-approved recruitment process, this agenda item seeks the Board's appointment of Katheryn Hickman effective December 26, 2023. The effective date includes an overflow opportunity providing for a smooth transition of the Department Head position once Mr. Picker retires effective January 26, 2024.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item: Vulnerable Populations

PREVIOUS ACTION

On November 28, 2006, the Board approved the recruitment process for the screening, selection and appointment of Jennifer Lunt as the Alternate Public Defender.

On March 20, 2007, the Board approved the appointment of Jennifer Lunt as the Alternate Public Defender.

On September 12, 2017, the Board approved the recruitment process to be used in the screening, selection and appointment of a new Alternate Public Defender.

On November 28, 2017, following the resignation of Jennifer Lunt (effective January 5, 2018) the Board conducted interviews of four Alternate Public Defender candidates and selected Marc Picker to move forward as the top candidate for Alternate Public Defender.

On December 19, 2017, the Board officially appointed Marc Picker as Alternate Public Defender effective retroactively to 12/11/2017 with an annual salary of \$156,644.80.

AGENDA ITEM # _____

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Washoe County Code 5.450 the Alternate Public Defender position is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Board of County Commissioners.

The Alternate Public Defenders office was created in March 2007 to handle cases conflicted by the Public Defender’s Office and reduce the number of cases assigned to private counsel. A conflict exists when the Public Defender’s Office has previously represented a witness, victim, or codefendant in a new case.

In accordance with NRS 260.010(5), Washoe County Code 5.439(2), and the Board’s approved process for recruitment and appointment of unclassified management positions, the following process and timeline was established for the recruitment/appointment of the Alternate Public Defender:

Job Announcement Advertised	July 12 – August 16
Recruitment extended	August 18 – September 1
Interviews by Panel (Panel included District 2 Commissioner and County Manager)	September 29
Chair / Vice Chair notified of recommended Candidate	Week of October 2
Recommendation to Board for Formal Appointment	November 14
Effective Hire Date	December 26

Human Resources advertised the position in the following ways: State Bar of Nevada website and newsflash which included 6,000 emails to attorneys in Nevada; Nevada Department of Employment Training & Rehabilitation (DETR); Governmentjobs.com; LinkedIn, LinkedIn Recruiter, Facebook, Twitter, Indeed; sent the job announcement to Public Defender and Alternate Public Defender, State Public Defender, multiple attorney organizations; members of the Washoe County Bar Association, Public Defenders and Alternate Public Defenders in Nevada and multiple local Criminal Defense Attorneys.

The interview panel included Washoe County Commissioner Mike Clark, Clark County Special Prosecutor Jenelle Thomas, Washoe County Manager Eric Brown, and Assistant Washoe County Manager Kate Thomas. The interview panel recommend Katheryn Hickman to the Board of County Commissioners to be appointed Washoe County Alternate Public Defender.

Katheryn Hickman received her undergraduate degree from the University of Nevada, Reno and achieved her Juris Doctorate from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 2008. She has been working at the Alternate Public Defender’s Office since October 2022 and prior to that was Chief Deputy Public Defender where she was the Training and Resource Director and she supervised the Category A team, which was a team of attorneys and investigators that handled all the cases that carried a potential life sentence.

Prior to Katheryn's employment in Washoe County, she served as a Deputy Public Defender in the State of Colorado's Public Defender System. Mrs. Hickman serves with the Nevada Attorneys for Criminal Justice ("NACJ") and in April of 2023 she participated in drafting an Amicus Curiae brief on behalf of that organization in a case, Cameron v. State, which is currently pending in front of the Nevada Supreme Court.

The final step in the recruitment process is Board appointment of the Alternate Public Defender including approval of the proposed annual salary and start date as recommended by the County Manager.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Alternate Public Defender position is authorized and included in the FY24 adopted budget. As a required position, it will also be included in the FY25 adopted budget. The fiscal impact associated with the overfill period will be absorbed within the Alternate Public Defender's FY24 budget in cost center 128010.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the Board of County Commissioners appoint Katheryn Hickman as the Washoe County Alternate Public Defender effective December 26, 2023, with an annual salary of \$211,120.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be:

"Move to approve the recommendation for the Board of County Commissioners to appoint Katheryn Hickman as the Washoe County Alternate Public Defender effective December 26, 2023, with an annual salary of \$211,120."