



WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service
www.washoecounty.gov

STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: January 13, 2026

DATE: December 17, 2025

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Chris Wilson, Chief Justice of the Peace, Sparks Justice Court
(775) 353-7620, cwilson@washoecounty.gov
Jessica Longley, Justice of the Peace, Sparks Justice Court
(775) 353-7620, jlongley@washoecounty.gov
Erica Flavin, Justice of the Peace, Sparks Justice Court
(775) 353-7620, eflavin@washoecounty.gov

THROUGH: Chris Wilson, Chief Justice of the Peace

SUBJECT: Recommendation to acknowledge and approve, effective February 1, 2026, for Sparks Justice Court, a waiver of the six-month cooling off period for Judge Kevin Higgins. [\$0 net impact]. (All Commission Districts.) FOR POSSIBLE ACTION

SUMMARY

Sparks Justice Court requests approval to waive the six-month cooling off period for Judge Kevin Higgins following his upcoming retirement on January 31, 2026. To alleviate Court congestion, Sparks Justice Court will request Judge Higgins to sit as a senior judge due to the difficulty in obtaining coverage.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item: Court Operations

PREVIOUS ACTION

On April 26, 2016, the Board of County Commissioners adopted the Washoe County "Cooling Off" Period Policy for Former Employees.

BACKGROUND

The enactment of Assembly Bill 424 (AB 424) passed in the 81st Legislative Session (2021), requires the Court to hold hearings seven days a week, 365 days a year. Properly staffing the weekends and holidays has created an operational hardship. For over 22 years, Judge Higgins has served on Sparks Justice Court, serving for nearly 9 years as Chief Judge and he can fill in as needed as a Senior Judge soon after his retirement.

On April 26, 2016, the Board of County Commissioners approved the requirement of a six-month “cooling off” period before a former employee, official, or county commissioner can enter into an independent contractor agreement with the County after leaving service. The BCC may waive the six-month cooling off period in cases of urgent operational need or hardship. Such waivers are considered on a case-by-case basis. Waiver must be approved by the Board in a public meeting, and the requestor must submit a staff report justifying the operational hardship.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation to acknowledge and approve, effective February 1, 2026, for Sparks Justice Court, a waiver of the six-month cooling off period for Judge Kevin Higgins. [\$0 net impact].

POSSIBLE MOTION

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

Move that the Board of County Commissioners approve and acknowledge, effective February 1, 2026, for Sparks Justice Court, a waiver of the six-month cooling off period for Judge Kevin Higgins. [\$0 net impact].