

Gallup hires new \$105K City Attorney

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 16 June 2017 03:42



Kozeliski retiring at end of July

When the Gallup City council went looking for a replacement to fill the shoes of George Kozeliski, they didn't have to look that far. A vote on an employment agreement to hire local attorney Curtis Hayes away from Western New Mexico University in Gallup took place June 13 and was unanimous.

"The full council was in on the interviewing process," Mayor Jackie McKinney said. "This is a vote for an approval of an employment agreement."

The city first announced June 7 that Hayes, currently a professor of criminal justice and business law at Western New Mexico University in Gallup, had been chosen as the next city attorney. Hayes starts the new job on July 17. George Kozeliski's official last day at city hall is July 31. Hayes will engage in part-time duties after July 4.

Hayes will earn an annual salary of \$105,000. The amount is a little lower than Kozeliski's annual salary of \$117,045.

"Curtis Hayes' background and experience in many aspects of the law, and specially in the area of criminal justice, will be a very valuable asset to the city of Gallup," McKinney said.

As city attorney, Hayes will be responsible for providing legal representation and counsel on

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matters related to city business. The city attorney is an appointed position, a job that serves at the pleasure of the Gallup city Council.

Hayes, who is originally from Alamogordo, has worked at WNMU since 1993 and has been employed at the Gallup branch of the school since 2014.

Prior to becoming a full-time educator, Hayes practiced law in New Mexico for 10 years, mostly as a prosecutor. As an attorney for the 6th Judicial District Attorneys Office in Silver City, he served as the general counsel for Grants County.

During his tenure at WNMU, Hayes oversaw the creation of an online criminal justice degree program and the creation of a criminal justice degree program at the Gallup branch. He obtained a National Science Foundation grant to create a digital forensics program at WNMU that provides training in cybercrime investigations to police officers in new Mexico. He has taught legal topics in the WNMU Police Academy for the past 15 years.

Upon being introduced at Tuesday's city council meeting, Hayes said he was pleased with the application process and looked forward to the city attorney duties.

"I look forward to working with the council," Hayes said after the vote process. "Thank you."

Hayes possesses undergraduate and juris doctorate degrees from the University of Utah. Besides Hayes, the city received city attorney job applications from John Bernitz of Gallup, Alfred Quintana of Albuquerque and Robert Medina of the Pueblo of Zia.

Bernitz is a public defender at McKinley County District Attorney's Office; Quintana is a prosecutor at the District Attorney's Office in Albuquerque and Medina is general counsel to Zia Pueblo.

The next big departmental hire at the city is for a library director. Current Gallup Library Director

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and New Jersey native Mary Ellen Pellington announced her retirement about two weeks ago.

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