
Judge Richard Harper Retires - Long Serving Brookings Jurist

September 30, 2020



Brookings Municipal Court Judge Richard Harper is retiring after 23 years of service. The Brookings City Council accepted his retirement resignation, which will be effective October 1 at their Sept. 14 meeting.

“We thank Judge Harper for his service to our community,” Mayor Jake Pieper said. “We know that his service as judge has been a major part of his life for the last two decades, and we wish him well in adjusting to a real retirement.”

Originally appointed by the City Council in 1997, Harper has adjudicated hundreds of Municipal Code and traffic violation cases over the years. The jurisdiction of the court was expanded to include traffic violations in 2013.

In a hand-written note to Harper, Oregon Supreme Court Justice Martha L. Walters wrote: “I write to congratulate you on your years of service as a Municipal Judge. Our municipal courts are the closest to the people and your willingness to listen and decide have demonstrated that there is a system of justice in which they can believe. I was a City Attorney before I went on the bench – still a highlight for me, as I hope your service has been.”

Prior to serving as the part-time Brookings Judge, Harper retired from a law enforcement career in California, including working as Chief Investigator for the Del Norte County District Attorney's office as an investigator with the Narcotics Task Force. "It is kind of ironic that I retired from the Los Angeles Police Department after 23 years and four months of service, and am now retiring as Brookings Judge after exactly the same number of years and months," Harper noted.

"It has been a wonderful experience serving as Municipal Judge for Brookings," Harper said. "I love working with people, and feel that I have helped people resolve issues in a way that has improved their lives.

"One of the most rewarding aspects has been to perform hundreds of marriages over the years, seeing and helping people start out on a new life together," Harper said. "I have also worked with some residents through the court for a number of years... some starting as juveniles... to help them work their way through the consequences of making mistakes, and encouraging them to take positive action in their lives. This has been very rewarding," Harper said.

"The experience in working with Brookings officials and staff has been good. There has never been any attempt by elected or appointed officials to influence any decision," Harper noted. "And I think most people are satisfied that they received a fair hearing with a fair outcome when they leave the courtroom."

Harper completed the training now required of non-attorney Municipal Court Judges in Oregon at the National Judicial College. He is a member of the Oregon Municipal Judges Association. "I think I...and others who serve in similar roles across the state... have demonstrated over the years that a non-attorney with some judicial basic training can serve effectively in the role of Municipal Court Judge and serve the community well," Harper concluded.

The City Council appointed Judge Pro Tem and retired City Manager Gary Milliman to replace Harper as Municipal Court Judge effective October 2.

Follow this story and details about newly appointed Judge Gary Milliman on currypilot.com and in the print edition.