

CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, AND ROLL CALL

Mayor Shannon Reynolds called the special meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilmembers David M. Viafore, Karen Mauer-Smith, Brett L. Wittner, Hunter T. George, Nikki Bufford, and Jim Andrews were present. Councilmember Hunter T. George attended the meeting virtually.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 6:02 P.M., Mayor Reynolds reported that the Council would take a five-minute recess and convene into Executive Session, not to exceed thirty (30) minutes to review the performance of a public employee, pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1)(g). City Manager Masko and City Attorney Eide were invited to attend the Executive Session.

Municipal Court Judge candidate, James Orlando, was invited into the Executive Session at 6:30 P.M.

At 6:30 P.M., Mayor Reynolds reported that the Executive Session will be extended by an additional thirty (30) minutes, not to exceed the hour of 7:00 P.M.

Municipal Court Judge candidate, James Orlando, exited the Executive Session.

At 7:00 P.M., Mayor Reynolds reported that the Executive Session will be extended by an additional fifteen (15) minutes, not to exceed the hour of 7:15 P.M.

The Council reconvened at 7:15 P.M.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Confirmation of Municipal Court Judge Appointment

Councilmember Viafore MOVED to confirm the City Manager's appointment of James Orlando as Municipal Court Judge, effective January 1, 2026; seconded by Councilmember Andrews. Mayor Reynolds invited Councilmember comments.

- Councilmember Viafore expressed support for the confirmation of James Orlando as Municipal Court Judge. He reported that Mr. Orlando has extensive experience, familiarity with the City and court operations, and strong community involvement.
- Councilmember Andrews expressed support for the confirmation of James Orlando as Municipal Court Judge and stated that he has over 40 years of service to Pierce County with a reputation for fairness and dedication to public service.
- Councilmember George acknowledged Judge Orlando's judicial career and qualifications for the position and expressed concern regarding community perception related to a past case. He stated that perception and public confidence in the judiciary were important considerations.
- Councilmember Wittner thanked the public for attending and found Judge Orlando to be a highly respected and capable judge despite concerns regarding a past case. He

acknowledged the community perception issues and the difficulty of the decision, and stated that he would support the appointment.

- Councilmember Bufford thanked Judge Orlando for participating in the appointment process and meeting with the Council. She expressed concern regarding the community's perception related to a past case. She acknowledged and appreciated Judge Orlando's broader career and service. She did not express support for the appointment.
- Councilmember Mauer-Smith acknowledged Judge Orlando's career and character and stated that she was unable to support the appointment due to concerns related to a past case.
- Councilmember Andrews stated that Judge Orlando acted in accordance with the law and applicable RCWs at the time of the decision in question and noted that the Court of Appeals had affirmed the judge's actions. He expressed concern that past decisions were being judged by current standards.
- Councilmember Viafore questioned why a single past case continued to be a concern in considering the appointment and emphasized Judge Orlando's long record of public service without professional discipline.

Mayor Reynolds invited public comment.

- James Orlando, address not provided, thanked the Council, attendees and supporters for their time and consideration and acknowledged responsibility for aspects of the language used in a past decision. He shared statements of support from colleagues upon his retirement and expressed appreciation to those present in support of his support.

The following individuals expressed support:

- John and Pamela Miller
- Diane Clarkson
- Joni Irvin
- Ron Culpepper
- Rebecca Reeder

Councilmember George left the meeting at 7:45 P.M.

- Brian Rybolt
- Vince Navarre
- Angela Oakland-Credger

Mayor Reynolds invited Councilmember comments.

- Mayor Reynolds stated that Judge Orlando has met the standard and is qualified. She stated that after considering his qualifications, the scope of the Municipal Court, the absence of any professional sanctions, and the interview panel's recommendation, she would support the appointment.

Mayor Reynolds requested a roll call vote: Andrews – Aye; Bufford – Nay; Mauer-Smith – Nay; Viafore – Aye; Wittner – Aye; Reynolds – Aye;

The Motion Carried (4-2), with Councilmembers Bufford and Mauer-Smith dissenting.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Viafore MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 P.M., seconded by Councilmember Wittner.

The Motion Carried (6-0).

S. Reynolds

Shannon Reynolds, Mayor

A. Burkhart

Arlette Burkhart, City Clerk