

JUDICIAL ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

March 18, 2026

The Judicial Advisory Board of the City of Mesa met in the Study Session room at City Hall, 20 East Main Street, on March 18, 2026, at 7:47 a.m.

BOARD PRESENT

Theo McCalvin, Chairperson
Keith Berkshire
Kent Cattani
Kelli Flinchbaugh
Sonia Martinez
Joshua Rogers

BOARD ABSENT

Kelley Durham, Vice Chair

STAFF PRESENT

Lisa Anderson
Kristin Hooker
Britanee Hudson

1. Meeting called to order and roll call.

Chairperson McCalvin called the meeting to order at 7:47 a.m. and conducted a roll call.

Chairperson McCalvin excused Vice Chairperson Durham from the entire meeting.

2. Approve minutes from the February 11, 2026 Judicial Advisory Board meeting.

It was moved by Boardmember Martinez, seconded by Boardmember Berkshire, that the February 11, 2026, Judicial Advisory Board meeting minutes be approved.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – McCalvin–Berkshire–Cattani–Flinchbaugh–Martinez–Rogers

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Durham

Chairperson McCalvin declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

3. Convene an Executive Session.

It was moved by Boardmember Martinez, seconded by Boardmember Rogers, that the Board enter into an executive session at 7:48 a.m.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – McCalvin–Berkshire–Cattani–Flinchbaugh–Martinez–Rogers

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Durham

Chairperson McCalvin declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

- a. Discussion or consideration of employment, assignment, appointment, promotion or resignation of a public officer, appointee, or employee of the City [A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(1)]; discussion or consideration of records exempt by law from public inspection, including the receipt and discussion of information or testimony that is specifically required to be maintained as confidential by state or federal law [A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(2)]; and discussion or consultation for legal advice with the attorney(s) for the public body [A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(3)] for the following:
 - i. The reappointments of Presiding Magistrate Stephen Umpleby, Magistrate Alicia Lawler, and Magistrate David Allen.
 - ii. The recommendation of candidates for the City Magistrate vacancy.

(At 8:03 a.m., the executive session adjourned, and the Board reconvened the regular meeting.)

4. Conduct a public hearing to receive comments on the reappointments of Presiding Magistrate Stephen Umpleby, Magistrate Alicia Lawler, and Magistrate David Allen.

Chairperson McCalvin announced that this was the time and place for a public hearing regarding the reappointments of Presiding Magistrate Stephen Umpleby, Magistrate Alicia Lawler, and Magistrate David Allen.

Lauren Ramirez, Gilbert Municipal Court judge, spoke in support of Magistrate David Allen's reappointment. She stated that she has appeared before Judge Allen in her role as a prosecutor and commended his professionalism and ability to clearly articulate rulings and decisions. She further shared that, after becoming a Judicial Officer in 2022, Judge Allen made himself available to offer guidance and share his experience, which she said benefits not only the citizens of Mesa but also the broader judicial community throughout the State of Arizona. She added that Judge Allen serves as a mentor to new judges and is deeply committed to fairness and justice.

Judge Ramirez also expressed support for Presiding Magistrate Stephen Umpleby and Magistrate Alicia Lawler. She said that, during her time as a practicing prosecutor, she has had the privilege of appearing before all three judicial officers and recommended each of them for reappointment. She voiced confidence in the Board's selection of highly qualified judicial officers and stated her belief that the Board would continue to make strong appointments. She respectfully requested that the Board reaffirm its prior decisions and recommend the reappointments of Magistrate Allen, Presiding Magistrate Umpleby, and Magistrate Lawler.

Chairperson McCalvin thanked Judge Ramirez for her comments.

There being no additional public comment, the Chairperson declared the public hearing closed.

5. Conduct an interview of Presiding Magistrate Stephen Umpleby.

The members of the Judicial Advisory Board posed selected interview questions to Presiding Magistrate Stephen Umpleby.

6. Conduct an interview of Magistrate Alicia Lawler.

The members of the Judicial Advisory Board posed selected interview questions to Magistrate Alicia Lawler.

7. Conduct an interview of Magistrate David Allen.

The members of the Judicial Advisory Board posed selected interview questions to Magistrate David Allen.

8. Convene an Executive Session.

It was moved by Boardmember Berkshire, seconded by Boardmember Cattani, that the Board enter into an executive session at 9:17 a.m.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – McCalvin–Berkshire–Cattani–Flinchbaugh–Martinez–Rogers

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Durham

Chairperson McCalvin declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

a. Discussion or consideration of employment, assignment, appointment, promotion or resignation of a public officer, appointee, or employee of the City [A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(1)]; discussion or consideration of records exempt by law from public inspection, including the receipt and discussion of information or testimony that is specifically required to be maintained as confidential by state or federal law [A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(2)]; and discussion or consultation for legal advice with the attorney(s) for the public body [A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(3)] for the following:

- i. Reappointment of Presiding Magistrate Stephen Umpleby to a second two-year term.
- ii. Reappointment of Magistrate Alicia Lawler to a four-year term.
- iii. Reappointment of Magistrate David Allen to a four-year term.

(At 9:50 a.m., the executive session adjourned, and the Board reconvened the regular meeting.)

9. Discuss and approve recommendations to the City Council related to the reappointments of Presiding Magistrate Stephen Umpleby, Magistrate Alicia Lawler, and Magistrate David Allen, and granting Chairperson McCalvin the authority to draft a letter to the City Council regarding the reappointment recommendations.

Boardmember Martinez stated that Presiding Magistrate Umpleby not only appears to manage the Court efficiently but also demonstrates a strong awareness of the City of Mesa's goals and key performance indicators. She noted his commitment to ensuring the Municipal Court operates in alignment with the City's objectives and serves the needs of Mesa residents. She further expressed appreciation for his organizational leadership and efforts to ensure coordination among judges in meeting the needs of the community.

Boardmember Cattani reported that general feedback regarding Presiding Magistrate Umpleby's performance has been overwhelmingly positive. He stated that Judge Umpleby performs exceptionally well in the courtroom, provides strong administrative leadership, and takes a forward-looking approach while supporting the professional development of fellow judges.

Boardmember Rogers shared that, based on courtroom observations, Presiding Magistrate Umpleby demonstrates an excellent judicial demeanor, conducts proceedings efficiently, and treats litigants with professionalism and respect.

It was moved by Boardmember Martinez, seconded by Boardmember Cattani, that Presiding Magistrate Stephen Umpleby be reappointed.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – McCalvin–Berkshire–Cattani–Flinchbaugh–Martinez–Rogers

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Durham

Chairperson McCalvin declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

Boardmember Martinez expressed appreciation for Judge Lawler's interview and noted that, based on the recommendations received, Judge Lawler is regarded as a strong judicial officer who performs well on the bench with no significant concerns identified. She further highlighted Judge Lawler's role in specialty court, such as Serious Mental Illness (SMI) court, which requires a high level of skill and dedication, and indicated her understanding that Judge Lawler fulfills this role effectively. She indicated her support for the reappointment of Judge Lawler.

Boardmember Berkshire reported that, based on a courtroom visit, Judge Lawler conducted proceedings in a professional and appropriate manner and managed the courtroom effectively.

Boardmember Cattani stated that Judge Lawler provided strong responses during the interview, demonstrated significant experience, and is considered an asset to the Court.

It was moved by Boardmember Berkshire, seconded by Boardmember Martinez, that Magistrate Alicia Lawler be reappointed.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – McCalvin–Berkshire–Cattani–Flinchbaugh–Martinez–Rogers

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Durham

Chairperson McCalvin declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

Boardmember Berkshire stated that Judge Allen's responses to the Board's questions were extremely professional and reflected a genuine level of care and commitment. He noted that, while survey feedback identified concerns regarding timeliness, such concerns are preferable to issues involving due process violations or professional ethics. He expressed the view that Judge Allen is an asset to the bench.

Boardmember Cattani reported that based on his courtroom observation, Judge Allen handled the courtroom in a professional manner and provided thorough explanations. He mentioned that Judge Allen appears to be aware of feedback regarding timeliness and is actively working to improve in that area. He recommended the reappointment of Judge Allen.

It was moved by Boardmember Berkshire, seconded by Boardmember Rogers, that Magistrate David Allen be reappointed.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – McCalvin–Berkshire–Cattani–Flinchbaugh–Martinez–Rogers

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Durham

Chairperson McCalvin declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

It was moved by Boardmember Berkshire, seconded by Boardmember Flinchbaugh, that Chairperson McCalvin be granted the authority to draft a letter to the City Council regarding the reappointment recommendations of Presiding Magistrate Stephen Umpleby, Magistrate Alicia Lawler, and Magistrate David Allen.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – McCalvin–Berkshire–Cattani–Flinchbaugh–Martinez–Rogers

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Durham

Chairperson McCalvin declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

10. Conduct a public hearing to receive comments from interested members of the public on the appointment of candidates for the City Magistrate vacancy.

Chairperson McCalvin announced that this was the time and place for a public hearing regarding the appointment of candidates for the City Magistrate vacancy.

Kristin Culbertson, Superior Court judge, spoke in support of candidate Kevin Breger for the magistrate vacancy, citing his strong legal acumen, professionalism, and ability to approach cases with fairness and sound judgment.

There being no additional public comment, the Chairperson declared the public hearing closed.

11. Conduct public interviews with selected candidates for the City Magistrate vacancy.

The Judicial Advisory Board members posed selected interview questions to candidates Kevin Breger and Laura Frye.

(Chairperson McCalvin declared a recess at 11:35 a.m. The meeting reconvened at 12:32 p.m.)

The Judicial Advisory Board members posed selected interview questions to candidates Joan Sinclair and Alexia Sedillo.

(Chairperson McCalvin declared a recess at 1:42 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 1:47 p.m.)

The Judicial Advisory Board members posed selected interview questions to candidates Jacob Brown and Dane Paulsen.

12. Convene an Executive Session.

It was moved by Boardmember Flinchbaugh, seconded by Boardmember Berkshire, that the Board enter into an executive session at 2:30 p.m.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – McCalvin–Berkshire–Cattani–Flinchbaugh–Martinez–Rogers

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Durham

Chairperson McCalvin declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

a. Discussion or consideration of employment, assignment, appointment, promotion or resignation of a public officer, appointee, or employee of the City [A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(1)]; discussion or consideration of records exempt by law from public inspection, including the receipt and discussion of information or testimony that is specifically required to be maintained as confidential by state or federal law [A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(2)]; and discussion or consultation for legal advice with the attorney(s) for the public body [A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(3)] for the following:

i. Appointment of City Magistrate.

(At 3:15 p.m., the executive session adjourned, and the Board reconvened the regular meeting.)

13. Discuss and take action on a recommendation to the City Council identifying, in alphabetical order, the three best qualified candidates for the vacant City Magistrate position, and the granting of Chairperson McCalvin the authority to draft a letter to City Council regarding the recommendation of candidates.

Boardmember Berkshire discussed Ms. Sinclair's extensive judicial experience, highlighting her service on the bench and her ability to manage a significant caseload. He stated that she is an extremely competent judicial officer with an excellent professional reputation, and that she is highly respected within the legal community. He expressed the view that she would be a strong fit for the Mesa Municipal Court and recommended her for appointment.

Boardmember Martinez concurred with Boardmember Berkshire's remarks and added that, during the interview, Ms. Sinclair demonstrated an awareness of the differences between her prior judicial experience and the Municipal Court bench. She appreciated Ms. Sinclair's acknowledgement that additional training would be necessary to address new subject matters and noted her openness to that transition. She voiced confidence in Ms. Sinclair's ability to adapt effectively.

Boardmember Rogers reported that Ms. Sinclair has a strong reputation among her colleagues and expressed the view that she would work well with the existing bench at the Mesa Municipal Court.

Boardmember Martinez commented on Mr. Breger's breadth of experience, mentioning his many years of service within the City of Mesa in a general sense, also the work he does in the Mesa Municipal Court, and that he has worked in all different facets of multiple municipal courts. She said that Mr. Breger demonstrated a genuine commitment to his work. She noted that, while she felt he used the phrase "fair shake" more than she preferred, she otherwise appreciated his approach to the law and to the bench.

Boardmember Berkshire stated that Mr. Breger received very strong recommendations from former colleagues, members of the legal community, and individuals associated with the Mesa Municipal Court, reflecting a high level of respect for his work.

Boardmember Cattani remarked that Mr. Breger possesses a well-rounded background, having worked in multiple areas of the court system. He emphasized that serving as a judge has been a longstanding professional goal for Mr. Breger and that his experience has prepared him well for the position. He conveyed the view that Mr. Breger would serve effectively on the bench.

Boardmember Cattani stated that Mr. Brown performed very well during his interview, mentioning that his responses were clear, concise, and direct. He further commented that Mr. Brown demonstrated a solid background and relevant experience and indicated he would be comfortable supporting his nomination.

Chairperson McCalvin concurred, noting Mr. Brown's confidence during his interview.

Boardmember Martinez highlighted that, although Mr. Brown's primary courtroom experience is in another jurisdiction, he maintains strong ties with the City of Mesa, having grown up in the community and currently residing in Mesa. She pointed out his understanding that judicial decisions extend beyond the courtroom and have a direct impact on the community and noted her appreciation for his perspective.

Boardmember Rogers commented on Mr. Brown's enthusiasm for the position and his genuine interest in serving in the role.

Boardmember Flinchbaugh agreed and added that Mr. Brown demonstrated a strong passion for the law.

It was moved by Boardmember Berkshire, seconded by Boardmember Martinez, that Kevin Breger, Jacob Brown, and Joan Sinclair be recommended to the City Council as candidates for the vacant City Magistrate position, and that Chairperson McCalvin be granted the authority to draft a letter to the City Council regarding the recommendation of candidates.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – McCalvin–Berkshire–Cattani–Flinchbaugh–Martinez–Rogers

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Durham

Chairperson McCalvin declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

14. Discussion and approval of granting Chairperson McCalvin the authority to review and approve the minutes from today's meeting and forward to the City Council for acknowledgment.

It was moved by Boardmember Berkshire, and seconded by Boardmember Flinchbaugh, to grant Chairperson McCalvin the authority to review and approve the minutes from today's meeting and forward to the City Council for acknowledgement.

15. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

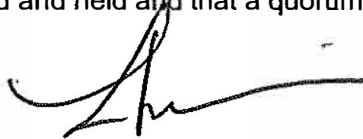
Next meeting:

**May 20, 2026, 7:45 a.m. – If needed
City Hall - Study Session Room
20 E. Main Street**

16. Adjourn.

Without objection, the Judicial Advisory Board adjourned at 3:23 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Judicial Advisory Board meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on 18th day of March 2026. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.



THEO MCCALVIN, CHAIRPERSON

vw/la