

New chief judge sworn in for Orange court

Mayor said the selection will benefit the city and its residents

By Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

In a ceremony held at the Orange Courthouse on April 20, Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. swore in Municipal Court Judge Sybil Elias as the city's new chief judge of the Orange Municipal Court. Elias fills the vacancy created by the retirement of former Chief Judge Eric Pennington.

"Our screening committee searched for a new chief judge who would be experienced and excellent as a judge: fair and tough on crime and criminals," Hawkins said. "Judge Sybil Elias best met those criteria. Our municipal court is a critical partner with the Orange Police Department and the citizens of Orange in working to make our city safer."

Hawkins said that Elias' appointment was made under Orange's Call to Service initiative, instituted by his administration. According to Hawkins, a total of 15 candidates were considered before Elias was appointed. The candidates were interviewed by a screening committee comprised of himself, City Attorney Marvin Braker, Business Administrator John Mason, and Police Capt. Kevin Sooy.

Hawkins said the selection committee reviewed the operations of the court and considered the qualifications and relative experience of all the candidates during a two-month process.

Braker wrote the committee's final report, stating that Elias had a "clear and cogent plan on how to

enhance and develop our court." According to the report, Elias' "awareness of the problems facing our city, her sensitivity to people, and her clear understanding of where our court needs to be as it moves into the future, are exceptional."

"Many people have pointed out to me that when criminals are arrested and convicted, they are too often back on our streets in short order," Hawkins said. "I also get complaints that our courts are not serious enough about quality-of-life crimes, such as prostitution, loitering and graffiti. Judge Elias represents the judicial excellence that the people of Orange expect."

An attorney with a private practice in Newark, Elias has served as

a municipal court judge in East Orange since 2003. She was a municipal court judge in Irvington from 2005 to 2009, and served as a visiting judge in Newark since 2005.

Prior to her judgeships, Elias served as an assistant prosecutor in the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, and as a law clerk in the Family and Criminal Superior Courts.

She holds a juris doctorate from George Washington University Law School and a B.A. from Rutgers University, where she graduated with honors.

While in law school, she received a Certification in International Human Rights Law from Oxford University in England.

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