

# Ex-Morrow prosecutor becomes Hermiston's first in-house city attorney

Tovey says he has received a warm welcome from the city

By ERICK PETERSON  
Hermiston Herald

Hermiston's first in-house city attorney begins working Thursday, Sept. 30.

The Hermiston City Council at its Sept. 13 meeting approved Richard Tovey as the successor to Gary Luisi, who retires after 23 years from his role as the city's attorney the day Tovey starts.

Luisi, however, is a private attorney with his own local office. As city attorney, Luisi was under contract but was not working in city hall, so he was not at the "beck and call" of city employees, Tovey said. For city staff to reach Tovey, all they will need to do is stop into his office, call or email.

Tovey said he is looking forward to serving Hermiston, and



Tovey

he is earning high praise from both his future and his past employers.

"We are very excited to have Richard start his service as our in-house city attorney," Hermiston City Manager Byron Smith, said. "It is a great time in our growth and movement forward as a community."

Tovey leaves his position as the deputy prosecutor in Morrow County Sept. 28. His former boss, Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson, said he was pleased with Tovey.

"We're greatly going to miss Richard," Nelson said. "That's not just me, as district attorney, but all my staff."

Tovey became deputy district attorney to Nelson shortly after Nelson took office in 2010. Nelson called him a close colleague, an equal and a friend. Tovey's departure, according to Nelson, is

a loss for the county, but a gain for Hermiston.

Nelson said he wants Hermiston to know it is lucky to have him.

## Tovey: past, present and future

Tovey, who grew up in Irrigon, went to Riverside High School in Boardman. After graduating high school, he went to Linn-Benton Community College and later Oregon State University. While there, he majored in history and anthropology.

"I thought I would become a history teacher," he said. Instead, he decided to attend the University of Montana School of Law to become a lawyer.

He took the bar exam in 2004 and passed. This began his career in law. He worked for the district attorney's office in Coos County, starting in 2004 and lasting until his employment for Morrow County more than five years later.

"It was a good opportunity to come back to the area," Tovey said about returning to Eastern Oregon.

He liked being the deputy district attorney, and he admitted his latest move is a bit unconventional.

"It's not the most common career move," he said.

Becoming city attorney involves a pay cut, according to Tovey. Still, there are benefits and the city job is attractive. One plus to the new work, his new office is only a few miles from his Hermiston house.

He said the city council and others in Hermiston have been very warm in welcoming him. Throughout the interview process, he felt accepted and appreciated. It made him feel comfortable with this job.

Tovey, like Luisi before him, will represent the city council at meetings and assist the policy body when needed. He also will work with the city manager and city departments in reviewing contracts and providing legal advice.

He will have an office in the Hermiston Public Library for now, which is serving as the temporary location of Hermiston City Hall. When the new city hall is com-

plete, Tovey said he believes he will move into that building.

He will have no other jobs while serving as Hermiston's city attorney, he said.

Tovey is married and has four children. His oldest child, a boy, graduated from Hermiston High School in 2020. He has three daughters — a high school student, a middle school student and an elementary school student.

Describing himself as "boring," he said he is a 46-year-old family man without many hobbies. His main interests, he said, are helping his children in their sports. Sometimes, he serves as assistant coach.

He also is an active and involved member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Hermiston.

Tovey said he is happy about working for Hermiston. He said he expects to stay in the position throughout the time his children are in school. He may even continue as the Hermiston city attorney until his eventual retirement.

# New deputy trial court administrator excited to serve

By ERICK PETERSON  
Hermiston Herald

Irma Solis, former clinic manager for Mirasol Family Health Center, recently stepped into a new position as deputy trial court administrator. She began this role with the Oregon Justice Department's 6th Judicial District Sept. 20.

Solis said the position piqued her interest and she took this job to be involved in the "complex operational functions" that take place in courts.

"I am excited for the opportunity to utilize my skills in my new position and learn from each of my new peers," she said. "I am thrilled at this new challenge of learning my role and the trial court system from those with so many years of experience."

She works under Roy Blaine, trial court administrator, and helps with the oversight and managing of non-ju-

dicial aspects of the trial court.

"I am thrilled Irma Solis has joined the court family in Umatilla and Morrow counties as my deputy trial court administrator," Blaine said. "Ms. Solis brings added depth to our leadership team with her experience in customer service and human relations management. Court staff and judges, and I, look forward to introducing her to the court environment and to her helping us better serve our community in both counties."

Blaine said Solis' new position is important as it extends the court's presence and functions further across Umatilla and Morrow counties.

"With court facilities in Hermiston and Pendleton, as well as Heppner, we must be flexible to meet unique local circumstances while assuring that in each location our policies, procedures and functions are consistent and accurate," he said.

He credited the Umatilla and Morrow County Circuit Courts with having "a multitiered leadership team to achieve the goals of building public trust and confidence in government and the law, ensure the courts are open and available to all who need our services regardless of their situation or status, and to participate with other branches of government in improving services in our communities."

Solis, with her background in customer service and staff development, fits in well with the court's team of legal experts, according to Blaine. He also thinks she she brings a new perspective from her experience in Hermiston.

"In many ways we look forward to her rounding out our team and the larger court team with the services we bring to all the neighborhoods of our two counties," he said.

Solis, who grew up in the Stanfield-Hermiston area, attended Stanfield schools



Kathy Aney/Hermiston Herald

**Irma Solis poses for a photo Sept. 22, 2021. She is the new deputy trial court administrator helping oversee non-judicial aspects of trial court for the 6th Judicial District.**

through the eighth grade, after which she attended school in Hermiston. She graduated with honors from Hermiston High School.

Following high school, Solis graduated from Blue Mountain Community College, then earned a bachelor's degree in business administration, with a leadership, organization and management

concentration, from Eastern Oregon University, La Grande.

Prior to serving as Mirasol's clinic manager, she was the office manager at a dental office.

Solis maintains a busy life outside of work. Married to Eric Solis, her marriage is into its 17th year. She has three children, two daughters, ages

2 and 9; and a son, 5.

"I enjoy spending time with my loved ones," she said.

She also said she enjoys cooking, baking, crafting and jogging. Life, though, has been busy over the last few years, she said, and she has not jogged as much as she would have liked.

Though she does not belong to any clubs, Solis said she tries to do her best to help others when she can.

"Most recently, I was able to help out with a free bilingual basketball camp co-arranged by a good friend," she said.

She said she hopes to become even more active in her community, and she believes her current role as court administrator will help her achieve this goal.

"I love this area, it's my home. I love the growth and diversity we have and continue to see," she said. "I love that it still has a small town, close-knit feel to it."

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