

LOCAL & STATE

Discipline panel OKs Montezuma Co. judge's censure, suspension

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A three-member disciplinary panel accepted on Monday an agreement between a Montezuma County judge and the Colorado Commission on Judicial Discipline that specifies he will receive a censure, a suspension, and additional education for his admitted instances of misconduct.

Under constitutional Amendment H, which voters adopted in November 2024, County Court Judge Ian MacLaren was set to be the first judge to face an adjudicative trial next month under the revamped framework for judicial discipline. But after he and disciplinary authorities jointly requested that the adjudicators accept their agreed-upon resolution, the panel vacated the trial.

"The panel will accept the parties' proposed stipulation to discipline," wrote Weld County District Court Judge Vincente Vigil in the Monday order. The panel also included

former Pueblo County District Attorney Jeff Chostner and non-attorney Jeannie Valliere.

However, the order suggested the decision may not have been unanimous, as Vigil wrote that he had signed it "with consent on behalf of majority concurrence of the Adjudicative Panel."

Vigil said via email that he "unfortunately cannot" disclose the vote count due to the rule prohibiting panel members from commenting publicly.

The two-paragraph filing added that the panel would issue a formal order imposing discipline on MacLaren by Aug. 31.

The discipline commission originally sought MacLaren's removal from the bench. On July 11, however, the parties told the panel that a combination of public censure, 90-day unpaid suspension, and additional education were appropriate for MacLaren's misconduct. They suggested the voters of Montezuma



THE GAZETTE FILE

The Ralph L. Carr Colorado Judicial Center in Denver, shown in 2022.

County should ultimately decide in 2028 whether to remove him from the bench

during his retention election.

Among other things, Ma-

cLaren admitted to violating the rule requiring judges to act with integrity and impartiali-

ty when he used a hearing in a criminal case as a platform to publicly air his own views about the allegations and undermine the defendant's presumption of innocence. He also acknowledged abusing the prestige of his office by invoking his title when wildlife officials were preparing to cite him for a boating violation.

MacLaren and the commission told the adjudicative panel that a trial would not introduce new evidence "not already available to the public."

Under the resolution, MacLaren also agreed to receive mentoring until his judicial term expires.

"Here, the public censure and 90-day suspension are neither disproportionately lenient, nor disproportionately harsh, for the admitted misconduct," wrote the lawyers for MacLaren and the commission. "In fact, the parties submit the sanction is directly proportionate to the misconduct."