



MARICOPA COUNTY BOARD CHOOSES REPLACEMENT FOR EXPELLED REPUBLICAN LAWMAKER - THE CENTER SQUARE

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Photo: Julie Willoughby sworn into office as state representative on May 5, 2023 by Cameron Arcand / The Center Square

The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors appointed Julie Willoughby on Friday morning to fill the vacancy of expelled Republican Rep. Liz Harris. Willoughby was sworn in shortly after.

Following Harris' expulsion, three names were selected by Legislative District 13 Republicans for the board to decide from. Harris, Willoughby, and Steve Steele were chosen by the group. They were then interviewed individually by the board.

"The conversations were considerate and cordial," Supervisor Jack Sellers said of the interviews of the candidates, who represent the area covering Legislative District 13 and therefore got to make the final recommendation.

Willoughby lost to Harris by a narrow margin in the 2022 midterm election. Harris was expelled by the state House for inviting a guest to give a presentation riddled with false claims accusing many Arizona leaders of being connected with the Sinaloa Cartel.

"I would like to thank the PC's from District 13 for selecting three qualified candidates for our consideration," Sellers later said in a news release. "I interviewed all of them about important issues such as Prop 400, homelessness, water, and elections. We take this duty seriously and follow a process that includes background checks and interviews so residents can be confident in the person chosen to fill the vacant seat."

While the motion to go forward with an appointment of Willoughby went forward, Democrat Supervisor Steve Gallardo voted against Willoughby and noted that he would not have voted for any of the three names on the list.

"I cannot in good faith support a candidate," Gallardo said at the meeting.

Willoughby will serve out the remainder of Harris' term through 2024.

The appointment means lawmakers can get back to business. Harris represented the House Republican majority's one-member advantage and their ability to pass partisan legislation.

