

Rankin signs off for last time months earlier than expected

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The Daily Eastern News · Sheriff James Rankin – Final Sign Off

Coles County Sheriff James Rankin signed off for the last time Wednesday afternoon.

Rankin was originally elected in 2014 and announced in April 2021 that he would not seek re-election, saying he intended to finish his term which was set to end in late 2022.

Chief Deputy Tyler Heliene will serve as interim sheriff until the Coles County Board appoints a new sheriff.

Heliene said he hopes to serve his community in his new role.

“My goal is to continue to serve the citizens of Coles County and do the best job I can,” Heliene said. “We have great employees at the sheriff’s department, great deputies and staff, and my goal is to continue to serve the community and be there to help them out.”

Rankin has served nearly two terms as Coles County Sheriff. Rankin is a United States Army Airborne Veteran and served as a patrol officer since 2004, a Coles County courthouse security officer, a member of the Coles County Crisis Response Team and the CRT hostage negotiator and training coordinator.

Darrell Cox, former Coles County Sheriff and the Coles County board member representing district one, said he was disappointed that Rankin did not serve until the end of his term.

“I was just kind of disappointed that he quit before the end of his term. He was elected for a four-year term. You know, I’ve been elected office three times now, and I feel like you sign up for four years and I think the voters expect you to fulfill your obligation,” Cox said. “So I was kind of disappointed that he didn’t do his duty.”

Kent Martin, former University Police Department Chief, said he wanted to thank Rankin for his service and wished him well in retirement. Martin is one of two Republican candidates running in the primaries.

CCSO Deputy Stephen Spear is also running. He ran in 2018 but was beaten in the primaries by Rankin.

Spear said he wishes Rankin the best and hopes he enjoys being able to spend time with his family.

There are no Democrat candidates running.

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