



**SILICON VALLEY  
PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY  
FOUNDATION**

2022 Sheriff Candidate Questionnaire

Christine Nagaye

What makes you the best candidate for Sheriff and what is your personal experience with leading a large and diverse organization? Please list any major accomplishments. \*

The Sheriff's Office is in dire need of reform and I know I can deliver the changes that are needed for the Agency and the communities. I am the only candidate who wants these law enforcement reforms. I am a 25-year resident of the Bay Area and a 17-year resident of San Jose. I am a mom and Veteran. I am a LGBTQ+ ally, and I am married to a man of color. All of these help me understand the diverse nature of our county. I want our communities to feel safe and protected and I vow to fulfill my oath of "to protect and serve". I am the only candidate who is currently working on the line and I see the problems on a day-to-day basis. My opponents are too far removed from the issues to effectively solve them. I am a life-long Democrat and my views for Sheriff fall in line with those of the California Democratic party. I will fight for Santa Clara County's most vulnerable communities, protect working families and ensure that everyone has a chance live the "American Dream". I want Santa Clara County to be a place kids can be proud of where they live and residents feel safe.

My time in the United States Army was where I was trained the importance gathering diverse groups of people and leading with integrity. It was in the US Army where I learned the importance of not only leading by example. I have carried this training and mindset with me throughout my life. As a supervising sergeant, I oversee anywhere between 60-75 deputies on a daily basis. My greatest accomplishments have been 1) rewriting the use of force policy after the tragic and brutal death of Michael Tyree and 2) writing the first ever LGBTQ+ policy for the Sheriff's Office and spearheading the ongoing training for the agency.

The current Sheriff's Office has many current problems, including the investigation into the issuance of CCW's exclusively for campaign contributions to Sheriff Laurie Smith. What do you believe are the biggest current problems within the Sheriff's Office, how will you fix them, and what will be your top three priorities if elected? \*

The biggest issue currently facing the Sheriff's Office is the lack of law enforcement reform. Unfortunately, it just doesn't hold itself to this department. As your new Sheriff, my first priority will be an independent and thorough review of law enforcement practices and management of our county jails. The tragedies in our jails over the past six years is the most glaring example of the need for common sense reform. Reforms such as 1) Holding police accountable and revisiting qualified immunity 2) Improving transparency into policing by collecting more accurate data of police misconduct and use of force incidents 3) Improving police training and policies by: banning religious and racial profiling, providing funding for racial bias training for law enforcement.

There are currently 2 existing Consent Decrees, from prior lawsuits which the County has agreed to (Chavez v. County of Santa Clara and Cole v. County of Santa Clara). Has enough been done to address those issues and what will you do if elected to ensure compliance? \*

Absolutely not. The Sheriff's Office has had ample time to meet all the recommendations set forth in each of these consent decrees and continue to fall short year after year. As the Supervisor of the Operational Standards and Inspection Unit (OSIU) I was responsible for charting and organizing the completion of recommendations that had portions in which needed to be reviewed for compliance. If the jail reform required a change in policy, It was my responsibility to amend or rewrite the policy affected by the change and, once approved, to ensure badge staff was properly notified of the change and how it affected our working conditions.

One of the recommendations was to implement the Multi-Support Deputy (MSD) Unit which consisted of approximately 20 deputies and 1 MSD Sergeant. The codes were approved by the Board of Supervisors and the unit was initially formed in 2016. Unfortunately, since then, the unit has been disbanded and the deputies were reassigned to different teams throughout each of the facilities. I was appalled that this was done because this unit was developed strictly to help inmates who suffer from a wide variety of disabilities to include mental illness, developmental disabilities, and physical disabilities.

As you are probably aware, the California Department of Justice has opened a Patterns and Practice investigation into our Sheriff's Office to investigate allegations relating to conditions of confinement in its jail facilities, resistance to lawful oversight, and other misconduct. How do you intend to implement any meaningful change at the Sheriff's Office while this investigation is occurring? \*

First, as Sheriff, I will release any requested documents, video, and reports to both the Board of Supervisors and to the Office of Corrections and Law Enforcement Monitoring. There will be complete transparency. The days of favoritism and nepotism will be over. I will hold those accountable for their actions and there will be no interference from executive staff only full cooperation. I find it very unfortunate that many agencies have reverted to encrypted radio traffic. This just continues to show the lack of commitment to full transparency across the board. If the California Highway Patrol can find a workable means, why can we? I would also like to present an option to the Board of Supervisors for a fully electronic CCW application process. With a fully electronic system, this will, again, show complete transparency with the CCW process. Reports can be extracted and information can be redacted to keep the applicant's information confidential. I also plan a complete reform of the Custody Bureau from training to the living conditions. The inmates are paying a debt to society and need to be given the appropriate tools and a chance to rejoin society with dignity. The County and private entities need work together to provide these tools for our incarcerated residents.

We understand that the Sheriff's Office is currently understaffed with numerous deputies transferring to other agencies or putting in for retirement. What is your plan to retain officers and grow the department, what qualities and characteristics do you look for in deputies, and how many deputies do you need for your department to operate at appropriate efficiency? \*

My plan to recruit and retain deputies will be done with common sense. First, I will present the Board of Supervisors with the idea that the Sheriff's Office must merge the enforcement bureau and the custody bureau. Moving forward, I would like to have one academy, and everyone will graduate with a POST certificate. Upon graduation, the deputies will work at the jails for 6-8 months. Then they will train on patrol, and then train in the courts. The current custody bureau deputies will also be given the opportunity to complete additional training to obtain a POST certificate. Once a deputy graduates from the POST academy, they will then sign a contract in which they will commit to serve a minimum of 5 years with the Sheriff's Office. If they opt to leave earlier, they will be required to pay a portion of their training fees back to the agency.

With an actual retention program in place, the Backgrounds Unit will not have to rush applicants through the hiring process. They will have ample time to conduct a thorough investigation of each applicant and have a greater success rate of weeding out the "bad apples".

There needs to be a more efficient and effective recruiting process. During the recruitment process, we need to reach out beyond local universities not only troll individuals with a Criminal Justice major. History, Sociology, and Science majors, typically show the ability for critical thinking. In today's law enforcement climate, these are the applicants we must hire. We need more critical thinkers. Instead of them going towards a teaching credential, we can present the idea of a career in law enforcement. The unfortunate result with constantly recruiting those with a military, or criminal justice background leads to the assimilation of "they are all hammers, and everything they see is a nail".

The greatest quality I want in each applicant is for each applicant to value human life. The Sheriff's Office currently needs approximately 250 deputies to operate efficiently and effectively. Currently the Enforcement Bureau has seen a mass exodus and they are currently staffed 150-175 deputies below the approved coded positions. The Custody Bureau is also in dire need of approximately 100 deputies. These vacancies are currently being filled by deputies working overtime which is causing the budget to soar.

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What is your stance on releasing convicted serious and violent criminals (undocumented) into the custody of Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE)? \*

Currently Santa Clara County is a sanctuary county. If an undocumented individual has been convicted of that crime and their sentences have been served, they will be released to Immigration. I will not pawn off the sentencing and conviction to another country.

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There will be times when you will disagree with the Board of Supervisors policy directions. What will you do to maintain a strong working relationship with the Board when you disagree, especially if you feel their decision puts our county at risk? \*

I will always abide by their final decisions. However, I will research every agenda item that pertains to the Sheriff's Office prior to each meeting. I will voice my opinion on agenda items that may have a future impact on the Sheriff's Office. I will always lobby my position, but that does not mean I will go against them. I currently have a jovial relationship with members of the Board of Supervisors (BOS). As the Supervisor, while assigned to the Operational Standards and Inspection Unit, I attended numerous BOS meetings and value their insight and opinions as they relate to the County and to the Sheriff's Office.

What is your plan to build community trust with the two million residents of Santa Clara County? \*

I plan to have greater community outreach. Currently, the Sheriff's Office does not reflect the diversity of the communities in Santa Clara County. I will continuously meet with LGBTQ+ leaders, Asian Pacific American leaders, Jewish leaders, Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) Leaders, Hispanic Leaders, Muslim leaders and so on. I will work tirelessly with these groups to regain their trust. Ultimately, I would like to build a commission consisting of deputies and community members to work together to aid our communities reestablish the trust that has gone by the wayside for many years with law enforcement. Once created, I would also like to involve the local police departments. The community trust needs to be with all law enforcement, not just the Sheriff's Office.

Major violent crimes in San Jose and Silicon Valley have increased since the implementation of Propositions 47, 57, and AB109. As an elected official, would you use your position to advocate for changes to these laws, and if so what would you want changed? \*

According to FBI statistics, Santa Clara County is well below the national average for violent crimes. Although there was a minor uptick from 2014-2016 when Proposition 47 was voted in place, that number has continued to drop over the years. In 2020 the state violent crime rate was 2.6% below that of 2010 before California embarked on criminal justice reform. These propositions were voted on and passed by the voters. It is up to the DA to prosecute and to continue to prosecute these crimes. However, if you commit a crime, it is my job in law enforcement to stop you. Then it becomes the criminal justice system and the District Attorney to hold someone accountable. Just as it should if someone has committed a crime.

A recent major decision with the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors involved either building a new jail or constructing a new mental health facility. If elected, what can you do to improve mental health care services while in jail and lower the recidivism rate? \*

You need look no further than the Michael Hogan tragedy to see the need for a mental health/wellness center to be constructed in lieu of a new jail facility in Santa Clara County. I wholeheartedly agree with Supervisor Susan Ellenberg, who expressed her misgivings about the document county executive staff recently submitted to the Board of Supervisors.

The report, which advocated a new 535-bed facility to replace the Main Jail South is a slap in the face to community groups and civil rights advocates who met with elected officials just last year to promote a treatment center for people with mental health issues and those who struggle with alcohol and drug use disorders.

Tackling the problem of recidivism is one of the main tenants in my campaign for sheriff. Our jails need to be about more than housing people for a period of time and then sending them back to the same situation. We need social workers and counseling available to inmates, as well as education and job placement opportunities. Mental health is a key part of this. We need to establish and fund a program that links law enforcement and social and medical services.

According to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, close to a third of California's incarcerated residents have a documented serious mental illness. Many would agree that prisons and jails in our state have become default mental health institutions.

There are hundreds and hundreds of residents in county jails across California who wait months or even years to be transferred to a state hospital.

According to the California Department of State Hospitals, a large percentage of the residents who were found incompetent to stand trial were facing charges related to homelessness and untreated psychosis.

A new behavioral health facility in Santa Clara County is not only necessary, but also long overdue. Furthermore, I think it should not be built near the Main Jail, but at our Elmwood facility. Once a normal baseline is achieved, the residents in this facility can become part of the job placement and training programs available to other residents.

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SVPAF believes programs like Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) have failed in SCC because they are exceedingly expensive and enable homelessness by precluding treatment of its underlying causes: mental illness and substance abuse. Do you believe our position is correct? As Sheriff, what would your role be in advocating for a better response to homelessness? \*

The reasoning there is a little lacking. There are plenty of drug addicts and mentally ill individuals who are not homeless. There are also many individuals who are homeless because they lost their jobs or are financially devastated due to an unforeseen health care bill.

Unfortunately, I have reached out and spoken with people who specializes in this topic have told me that the Sheriff's cannot help the homeless crisis here in Santa Clara County, but as sheriff I can make a commitment to ensure the safety of all of our communities is a priority. That said, as Sheriff, I have a voice, I have a bully pulpit, and I will use it to advocate for affordable housing throughout Santa Clara County.

The city of SJ recently passed several gun control measures but critics have stated these laws unfairly target law abiding gun owners and do nothing to address violence in the city. If elected, how would you respond to these laws and what will you do to reduce major violent crimes in SCC? \*

This law as well as the law Gavin Newsom is trying to pass at the state level that mimics the Texas abortion law is an overreach and pure political theater. This is coming from life-long Democrat and a gun control advocate. I don't believe these laws will stand up to the legal challenge even with a very liberal 9th Circuit. I advocate for common sense gun control measures. I believe the NRA creates more problems than they fix, but I also believe law abiding citizens have their 2nd Amendment rights as much as I made disagree with their need to express themselves that way. I do not support these laws. I do support ongoing, complete and thorough background checks. There also needs to continual training and ongoing proficiency. I do support allowing the CDC to study gun violence. To reduce major violent crimes in Santa Clara County, it is my job as Sheriff to ensure the laws are being enforced and we need to be engaged with the communities to understand what is going on. To close out this question, adding more guns to the communities will not lower crime rates.

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