



**SILICON VALLEY
PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY
FOUNDATION**

2022 Sheriff Candidate Questionnaire

Sean Allen

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. *

Your answer:

I am the candidate who is the most familiar with the agency and its current issues. There isn't anyone that is running who has fought longer or harder for equality, diversity, reforms, accountability, and transparency. I was forced to litigate and prevail for issues of corruption, discrimination, sexual harassment, and retaliation.

As a Union leader, I have a successful record of defending staff because of the lack of serious investigations, corrupt leadership, and lack of adequate training. On the opposite side, I am one of the longest-standing trainers within the agency. In that position, I have identified and reported flaws within the system and ways to correct them that the administration has failed to rectify. My experience with leading large organizations includes acting in command level positions, leading the largest of our Unions (800 employees), leading our supervisor/manager Union and running a private business (Martial Arts Schools).

My performance evaluations reflect a remarkable history. I have saved lives and was a past recipient of the "Employee of the Quarter." I have taught "de-escalation" tactics for decades to jail personnel, including using force alternatives during scenario-based training. If elected, I will work to implement oversight with teeth effectively and reorganize the executive staff

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 correlation between donations and special treatment are also prevalent internally. Many of the employees that donated were given special assignments and promoted at alarming rates. The current problems include culture, training, ethics, incompetent leadership, lack of accountability, transparency, reforms, and training.

As Sheriff, I would replace the Under-Sheriff and the three Assistant Sheriffs via a national search with at minimum two of the positions filled from external hires. This would help change the culture, bring a new vision, and promote accountability. There are 15 Captains, with one commanding each division. I would consider replacing some of those employees and rotating some of them. This would build diversity, prevent complacency and bring new visions. To invigorate and reset the Sheriff's office, the managing staff needs to be replaced to restore public trust, morale and provide better service via accountability, reforms, and transparency.

I believe a thorough audit/investigation should be conducted on the whole department and done by outside investigators. The Use of Force policy, body work camera policy, mental health care practices, internal affairs practices, hiring, and promoting practices would be thoroughly vetted involving subject matter experts. Then plans should be formulated, vetted and put into place with time-sensitive goals to keep the department moving towards effective change.

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? *

As the Foundation is 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. This indicates an existing and long standing problem, and the services we provide are not adequate. I have seen and reported some of these issues. I intend to rebuild trust, relationships, and partnerships that have been broken. I will work with the consent decree requirements, collaborate with subject matter experts, and involve the Board of Supervisors to make sure we do better than expected. To date, these things aren't occurring, and we are a long way from complying.

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? *

I intend to establish a meaningful relationship with any groups that have the interest in bettering the services of the Sheriff's office. The Sheriff's office requires its leadership to be overhauled as well as the training. I will be an active participant, present and available as an employee. It is my responsibility to lead by example; hold myself to a higher standard. I will make sure that the Sheriff's Office cooperates with the investigation

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? *

Our retention problems can be traced back to poor leadership. This includes a lack of integrity with our promotional process and other opportunities for advancement. The deputies need support from leadership with intimate knowledge of why the department has broken down, someone that won't plead the fifth, who is not afraid to make aggressive changes and knows where to start to make that happen. I will look for employees who have integrity, vision, commitment, objectivity, drive, problem solving ability; who are analytical, thorough and have the will to do the right thing even when it might not be the popular thing to do. As it stands today, the current cause of staffing problems are mostly caused by vacancies. We must account for the "non funded" codes. We are filling daily with overtime and per diem employees and address services as needed.

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

This county has adopted policies against cooperating with Immigration and Customs Enforcement Officials in that regard. In circumstances where policies and laws conflict, our priorities must always be public safety, as well as humane treatment, and constitutional protections. Prior to the policy change we cooperated with ice and gave them access to non-documented immigrants in our custody. Disallowed the federal government to initiate the deportation process prior to the release of non-documented immigrants. Local leaders did not agree with this practice because it impacted the families associated with these non-documented immigrants. But, in the recent years we have seen that some of these non-documented persons committed violent crime after being released from custody. This has raised the question of whether not cooperating with immigration customs enforcement has impacted public safety. Once any person has been adjudicated they should be allowed to part from the system but not until then.

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 strive to maintain good relationships with the Board knowing our goal to serve is the same, but our roles may expose different perspectives that sometimes conflict. I will stand firm on my needs and always present these needs and budgetary concerns with thorough back up materials

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

I will build the trust back by rebuilding the leadership of the organization to help support the foundation of the agency (those that do the majority of the work). As I mentioned earlier, I will be in the forefront of the department doing everything that is expected of our employees to model appropriate behavior. These actions will help boost morale and the confidence of the employees which will lead to better services. The Sheriff's office will become more collaborative, and inclusive to include effective oversight.

I will work with community groups, mental health and other agencies, improve training in de-escalation techniques for all segments of the department. I will keep lines of communication open for the public.

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? *

The intent of these laws are to ease prison overcrowding, while helping offenders reintegrate into the community. We must ensure that the proper funding is available for communities to provide needed services to help them get a foothold with housing, jobs and other services as needed. These programs done correctly can also have a positive impact on recidivism, But it is critical to provide non-carceral solutions by providing a means for people to better themselves.

As for AB 109, county jails weren't made for long-term housing. Therefore the presence of people who have served time in prison impacts the people who have not (staff and those pending adjudication). We must guard against unintended consequences of housing felons in County jails, such as mixing those who have spent time in state prison with first time offenders. As the prison population is often more sophisticated, and prison gangs, for instance, could control illegal activity outside of the institution.

It is absolutely a good idea for those who want to better themselves to be given the opportunity and means to do so.

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? *

As Sheriff, I would make sure adequate care is provided and be transparent when it's not. I would advocate for adequate care and resources to provide that care. The solution is not as simple as building one facility instead of another. We need to bring in subject matter experts to help guide us, and to employ a variety of techniques and collaborative efforts with mental health professionals, our local elected officials, Sheriff's personnel with experience dealing with homeless and those with mental health issues, advocates for the mentally ill and others, to create meaningful solutions that are effective in the long term.

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? *

There is no simple answer to the problem of chronic homelessness. Permanent supportive housing is just one pathway. We need to explore all options with groups such as yours and others in the community. I look forward to working with you and others on finding solutions that safeguard the public and protect the rights of all populations.

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? *

I do support the ban on ghost guns as there is no reason for law-abiding citizens to have them. I support common-sense gun laws.

Our jail population has been reduced for many reasons, including the pandemic. But many of these persons have chosen crime and at times escalate with violence because their options to sustainable living have been impacted. We live in one of the most prosperous communities in this country yet we are faced with deciding how we allocate funds to provide assistance to those in need. Incarceration isn't the answer for all and in order to reduce recidivism we have to provide meaningful solutions and reallocate capital to improve our success with the other options.

As Sheriff, I will use resources to reduce violence in areas where it has been more statistically prevalent. But this doesn't always mean arresting people. This means bringing practical solutions to real problems and providing pathways for success to occur.

The pandemic has created situations that has intensified relationships between race, gender and religion. This needs to be addressed quickly but with cultural sensitivity in our county to keep the communities safe.

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