

Garrett Scott takes early command of troubled sheriff's department

May 27, 2022



There's a new sheriff in town.

Retired Crescent City Police Department Lt. Garrett Scott was appointed by the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors to become interim sheriff, effective May 25, until the current term of office expires on January 3, 2023.

It was the logical choice. Sheriff Scott is currently running unopposed for sheriff in the June 7 primary election. He will face no opposition in the November General Election and will begin serving his own four-year term on January 3, 2023.

His appointment comes at a time when the Del Norte County Sheriff's Department is suffering from serious morale problems, difficulties recruiting and retaining deputies, and in coping with jail conditions made worse by the incarceration of inmates declared to be incompetent to undergo further criminal proceedings.

The sheriff's department has been forced to release back onto the streets arrestees who have yet faced prosecution due to COVID, jail overcrowding, and the early release and decriminalization mandates imposed by state laws enacted in recent years. Back on the streets, these "catch and release" inmates have often committed new crimes before the courts took up their earlier matters.

County Supervisor Valerie Starkey said to Scott that she was "beyond excited to have you" after the board voted 5-0 without comment to make the appointment. "It's a really enormous task. The board of supervisors will be there to support you any way we can."

Scott told the board members, "We are going to bring the sheriff's department up to what the community desires."

Outgoing interim Sheriff Dan Schneck thanked the board "for allowing me the opportunity" to serve as sheriff.

In a brief interview following the board vote, Scott said he will work to restore public trust. The sheriff's department "has an image to uphold." He intends to "build up staffing, and to impose high standards" to ensure the "safety of Del Norte County," including the "outlying areas of Gasquet and Smith River."

"Staffing and funding issues" must be addressed, Scott said. The condition of the sheriff's department building is a turn-off to candidates considering a career with the Del Norte County Sheriff's department.

"When they drive by, they are not very interested," Scott said.

Pay, benefits and sign-on bonuses are areas that must be improved, Scott added.

"We must be able to compete with comparable agencies," he said.

Scott said the sheriff's office administration needs to be "held accountable."

"Deputies need to be recognized. We need to let the public know what is happening," he said.

Scott has found that the board of supervisors is "extremely supportive." He said he will explore "creative ways" to keep arrestees in custody, rather than release them onto the streets before their cases are resolved.

Former Crescent City Police Lt. Garrett Scott was appointed to fill the remaining term of ex-Sheriff Erik Apperson. But not before others preceded him in the same position.

Apperson resigned unexpectedly, leaving office on October 1, 2021, citing vague family-related medical issues.

Apperson's handpicked replacement, Undersheriff Randy Waltz was elevated to the interim sheriff position until he resigned March 14, 2022, after being charged with various election-related criminal offenses concerning his nomination documents to run for a four-year term. Waltz entered a plea of no contest last week to a single misdemeanor count after felony charges were dismissed.

It was then Lt. Dan Schneck's turn to be elevated to the interim sheriff position after Waltz's departure.

Schneck's service as interim sheriff ended with Scott's appointment.