

Sheriff makes his case for more money... “Boots on the Ground”

October 19, 2024



Del Norte Sheriff Garrett Scott appeared before the Board of Supervisors, last week, making his case for more funding. Scott addressed supervisors with the chronic challenge facing his Department both in hiring deputies and more importantly, retaining those very deputies who work on the streets, in the jail and serve within the Courts.

The problem roots down to compensation.

Scott presented a convincing power point presentation that while experience and training are valuable, many in his Department transfer to law enforcement agencies for better pay. The Sheriff is seeking to eliminate three long-term vacancies in patrol and raise compensation for patrol, Corrections and bailiff Staffing in the Courts. The proposed restructuring would raise salaries and hopefully hire and retain vital staff.

Presently, there are 10 vacancies in Patrol, according to Scott who lamented, "... it can take as long as 18 months before we can put a Deputy on the streets. The process is tedious and painfully slow." An entry level Deputy now starts at \$26.61 per hour. With the freezing of the three vacancies will raise the hourly rate to \$30.81. The rate for a Sergeant would raise from \$34.82 to \$40.34 per hour.

On the Corrections side, entry level would rise from \$22.72 to \$25.04. A Sergeant position in Corrections would raise from \$28.29 to \$31.20, respectively.

Scott gently reminded supervisors the Sheriff is Constitutionally-mandated to operate the Jail.

The Sheriff stated he's deluged with calls from the public for more "...boots on the ground." In a follow up conversation with The Triplicate, Scott shared the dilemma he sees facing the Department. "I'll need to pull more deputies off patrol and cover Corrections and Court bailiff needs. I'm mandated to cover these areas." Reaction from the public was profound. Public Speaker Sam Strait exclaimed, "Board, Are you listening?" (while addressing the supervisors). Strait continued, "It is astounding you (supervisors) do not understand the issue of having an unsafe community. It astounds me you equate additional funding for Animal Control, Department of Human Resources, Community Development from Measure R funds. I voted for 100 percent of the Measure R tax increase to be directed to... more boots on the street."

Public Speaker Chris Hughey, a retired CDCR corrections officer also expressed his disappointment deputies were so poorly compensated. "...maybe if you paid our deputies more money, they could buy a home and not be so quick to transfer to other police agencies around the State."

Sheriff Scott says he plans to return to the Board in the immediate future to explain on how his Department can attract more experienced lateral transfers to Del Norte.

With a motion from Valerie Starkey and second from Darrin Short to freeze three patrol vacancies, the Board voted 5-0 to study the impact of these salary increases.

The Board meets the second and fourth Tuesday's at 10AM at the Flynn Center.