

911 Dispatch: The Sheriff Is Unavailable For Emergencies at this Time. Please Call Back Later

September 19, 2024



Don't be surprised when you make an emergency 911 call and hear the following:

“ The Sheriff is unavailable for emergencies at this time. Please call back later.”

I have recently had the time to view the Board of Supervisors eleventh-hour video window for the Public into the County's 2024-2025 annual budget. My view: it was a pointless waste of taxpayer resources, poorly attended by the Public and exposes the invasive nature of a growing local government that is ill- equipped to address the most critical need that residents have needed for decades: An effective Del Norte County Sheriff.

It is beyond comprehension that the collective, cognitive abilities of the five members of the Board do not recognize the severity of the ineffectiveness of the local Sheriff's department to provide the most basic of public safety throughout the county. It is even more egregious when the Sheriff, in a Public Forum, lays out a clearly worded prescription on how to address the problem and the Board behaves as if he were speaking in a foreign tongue.

While the problem has been an issue for years, no effort by the current Board to offer even the slightest assistance has come about, nor do I expect anything in the future. The much- talked about Measure R which

was widely advertised to correct deficiencies in such vital services has failed to materialize. The Board's financial contributions to augment pay, morale and equipment issues seem paltry to the extent that Scrooge's behavior seems generous in the extreme.

A recent example of the Sheriff's Office's inability to provide 911 emergency assistance at a deadly confrontation in a timely manner would have been 59 minutes and 59 seconds too late. A neighbor's wife was confronted by a homeless individual waving a hatchet under her nose, threatening to shoot her and her dog unless she produced the miscreant's imaginary cow. Fortunately for her, a neighbor heard the altercation and defused the situation.

This was not a one-time event in our neighborhood and it is likely to repeat throughout the County. What is truly preposterous is that the woman could have called our recently hired Measure R building inspector for a nail inspection and may have received service before the deputy arrived or had the plans approved by a recent Measure R hire in Planning for an Accessory Domicile Unit (ADU) before the same occurred.

While focusing on growing local government for ridiculously inappropriate employee hires and valueless services, our local Board seems oblivious to the nature of what supervisors are meant to be doing. The functionality of the Sheriff's office should be the ultimate of services that the Board of Supervisors should get right. There is no excuse for the Board's dereliction by not taking steps to immediately correct this colossal failure on its part. Unfortunately, I do not see the will on the part of this Board to move forward in any substantive way.

Supervisors must adhere to Sheriff's needs to increase compensation for all law enforcement personnel.

Sam Strait

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