

Letter: I Called 911 and Nobody Came

November 7, 2024



The bunglers were at it again. October 22nd the Del Norte Board of Supervisors had another bite at the Sheriff deputy apple and whiffed. The Sheriff made every effort to appear accommodating, offered a significantly less than adequate offer to correct the declining path of the staffing problem.

Item #13 on the Board's agenda passed 5-0 with little effort by the Board to understand whether or not this miniscule change in compensation for the deputies of the Sheriff's Department would do anything at all to accomplish the task before them. Not a single question, not surprising!

Our elected less-informed elected apparently missed the part about State-wide deputies making an average hourly wage of \$39.32. Paying \$10.00 less per hour than the State-wide average is hardly a successful way to stop the bleeding. Increasing wages for deputies in the "new" step adjustments package with insignificant increases hardly moves the needle. Worse yet, it has given the Board the opportunity to ignore the problem until the Sheriff's Department effectively ceases to exist. Hardly surprising.

In words of two syllables or less, it has been explained repeatedly to the Board of Supervisors that when you have highly sought after employees and there's a shortage of said employees, continued employment of such people will only occur if you pay them, decently.

..Such a simple concept.

All that being said, it begs belief that this Board of short-term problem solvers can't seem to get their collective acts together before something much more serious than the July 4th Southbeach event happens due to this obvious negligence.

What continues to expose this Board's recklessness is the fact that somewhat over \$4 million sits in the Measure R bank account which was specifically promised by County government when it passed, that deficiencies in the Sheriff's department would be addressed. Memo to Board: this is precisely what the money in Measure R was meant to correct! So, where's the BEEF?

It is pathetic that this Board has to be continually reminded its most important task is providing safety and security for Del Norte County. Thus far, supervisors are failing miserably. Until such time this Board of Supervisors gets up off their collective posteriors and becomes competitive in the world of compensation of deputy sheriffs, this debacle will only worsen.

The Sheriff's department in its present configuration will have just 10 officers to patrol the entire Rhode Island-sized county 24/7. The sobering figures are down from twenty-four deputies just ten years ago. For the Board's continuing education, it will be IMPOSSIBLE and FUTILE for the Sheriff to accomplish his sworn duty with such limited patrol staff. That's ABSURD! Are the words too big?

IM-POSS-i-BLE!

In addition, if this Board cannot see its way to raise the current compensation package sufficiently to retain and hire new deputies, the DNSD will remain a training department for other jurisdictions; this is hardly the way to treat an important asset. This is a call for action. Too often the Board is confronted with angry citizens over issues that are not as dire as what we are facing now due to the IR RE SPON si BLE behavior of this Board toward its most important department. Things need to change now!!! THIS IS A 9-1-1 CALL, not at the end of February, not within the next budget cycle, Wake up, supervisors NOW!

By Samuel Strait

Crescent City