

Written Public  
Comment(s) for **Item No. 1**

# Stephen M. Wagstaffe, District Attorney

## COUNTY OF SAN MATEO



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October 23, 2023

President Dave Pine and Honorable Board Members  
San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

RE: Study Session – Sheriff’s Office Oversight in San Mateo County Tuesday, October 24, 2023

Dear President Pine and Honorable Supervisors,

I apologize that I cannot be personally present on October 24, 2023 to address you on the important issue of Sheriff’s Office Oversight. My wife is having surgery on Tuesday, and I will be with her for the entire day.

As the District Attorney, I urge you to support the position of Sheriff Christina Corpus and reject the proposal for a Sheriff’s Office Civilian Oversight Board with subpoena power and an inspector general position. Sheriff Corpus has publicly set forth the reasons there should not be such an Oversight Board and I know she will reiterate those reasons at the Board meeting on Tuesday. From my perspective there is nothing to be gained with such oversight and much to be lost in setting up such a Board.

As with every proposal the Board of Supervisors considers, the core decision must be what is not working and why change must be implemented. Sheriff Corpus assumed office in January 2023 and has brought in a new leadership team that has worked hard to effectuate change where needed and maintained policies and programs that were working well and serving the public. There is no area that can reasonably be pointed to as a serious problem warranting Civilian Oversight with subpoena power to remedy the problem. The bottom line is there is no reason for implementing this proposal, and adding an unnecessary bureaucracy would simply impede the efforts of the Sheriff’s Office to continue efforts to modernize the department.

This is not to say that a citizen advisory board without subpoena power or an inspector general would not have value. Indeed, Sheriff Corpus does recognize the role such a board can have, and that is why early this year she established three separate citizen advisory boards to fulfill this role. Such an approach has worked in the city of Redwood City and can work on the county level. However, a citizen review board with subpoena power is completely different and would

detract from the positive work the Sheriff's Office seeks to accomplish. The cost should also not be ignored, and I am sure you can find many better ways to serve our community with the potentially several million dollars involved.

Proponents of the proposal state that an oversight body with subpoena power is needed to shed light on matters such as officer involved shootings or critical incidents. Under California law and by agreement among all law enforcement agencies in our county, the responsibility for investigating such incidents is the duty of my office or the California Attorney's Office. My independent District Attorney investigators conduct a meticulous and detailed investigation into all circumstances surrounding such cases. We then issue a very lengthy written report setting forth the basis for our conclusion. The Attorney General's Office does the same in the cases it handles. In order to ensure transparency, all of my office investigative reports and our report setting forth my decision are made available for any member of the public to read. We also place on our website all of the documents for public access. There is no reason to establish an oversight body to repeat what has already been completed. The fact that some may not like the conclusion of my office or the Attorney General's Office does not mean a different and additional investigation is necessary.

Sheriff Corpus has noted that such an oversight board with subpoena power would create an even greater recruitment problem for the Sheriff's Office. This is very important to the citizens of our county. Due to the recruitment problem, outstanding and crucial programs like the Sheriff's Work Furlough Program (allowing sentenced inmates to keep their jobs and support their families while serving their sentences) and transportation of inmates to our South San Francisco courthouse for court have to be suspended. If potential applicants to the Sheriff's Office will look elsewhere for employment due to concern about an oversight board with subpoena power, this would have a drastically negative impact on criminal justice.

San Mateo County is a very safe county with a comparatively low crime rate compared to other counties. We do not have scandals in law enforcement similar to what numerous other counties around the state deal with year in and year out. The county criminal justice system, including the Sheriff's Office, is working very well to ensure public safety and serve the citizens in our communities. Creation of an oversight board with subpoena power could upset that balance for the reasons Sheriff Corpus has noted. I agree with her conclusion and urge you to reject the proposal for an oversight board with subpoena power and for an inspector general.

Sincerely,



Stephen M. Wagstaffe  
District Attorney

**From:** [Nancy Goodban](#)  
**To:** [Dave Pine](#); [Warren Slocum](#); [David Canepa](#); [Noelia Corzo](#); [Ray Mueller](#); [CEO BoardFeedback coalition-for-a-safer-smc@googlegroups.com](#); [FxSMC Operations](#); [Michael Callagy](#); [Adam Ely](#)  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Re: Public comment for Item 1 on October 24 Special Meeting : Letter from Mike Gennaco, OIR Group, in support of Oversight  
**Date:** Sunday, October 22, 2023 7:07:47 PM  
**Attachments:** [San Mateo County Oversight Support Copy.pdf](#)

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Honorable Supervisors:

Please find attached a letter in support of oversight from Mike Gennaco of the OIR group, He serves as Monitor/Inspector General for Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Los Angeles, and Orange Counties. Mike is not available for public comment October 24 so he wrote a letter. As you know, he is available to consult on setting up a model here.

He also references President Obama: ”... **President Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing found that an essential pillar for the future of law enforcement was robust independent civilian oversight. For such oversight to be effective, it requires that an experienced entity has unfettered access to information, be independent, and can publish its reports consistent with any legal constraints.**”

He has a good reminder that oversight needs to be real. Otherwise it doesn't count.

It needs to be independent of the Sheriff’s Office (not like CARE Committee) and needs to have authority to gather information and make public reports (again, not like the CARE Committee).

We are counting on you, our elected leaders, to honor the five city/town councils (EPA, HMB, PV, RC. SM) plus NFO Community Council that voted to support oversight. They represent a third of the county’s residents. They should not be dismissed as a small loud fringe group. Plus the 37 organizations in the Coalition for a Safer San Mateo County.

We see this as a way to support our strong new reform-minded Sheriff Corpus and support her in moving towards 21st century policing. Oversight should help the organization run smoothly and allow the community to have a voice in public safety, which is all of our responsibility. Now is the time, with a good Sheriff to work with,

Thank you for your leadership.

- Jim and Nancy for the Coalition for a Safer San Mateo County.

[Nancy Goodban](#)  
[Fixin’ SMC](#)  
[www.FixinSMC.org](http://www.FixinSMC.org)  
[nancy.goodban@gmail.com](mailto:nancy.goodban@gmail.com)  
650-787-9859

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** [michael.gennaco@oirgroup.com](mailto:michael.gennaco@oirgroup.com)  
**Subject:** Letter in Support of Oversight  
**Date:** October 22, 2023 at 6:49:55 PM EDT  
**To:** [nancy.goodban@gmail.com](mailto:nancy.goodban@gmail.com)

Hello Nancy,

Per request, please find a letter in support of oversight in San Mateo County.  
Good luck this week.

Mike Gennaco





7142 Trask Avenue  
Playa del Rey, CA 90293  
323 821 0586  
Oirgroup.com

October 22, 2023

Nancy Goodban  
Fixin' SMC  
San Mateo County, California

Letter in Support of Effective Civilian Independent Oversight

Dear Ms. Goodban:

Please consider this correspondence in support of effective civilian independent oversight for San Mateo County. As you may know, former President Obama's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing found that an essential pillar for the future of law enforcement was robust independent civilian oversight. For such oversight to be effective, it requires that an experienced entity has unfettered access to information, be independent, and can publish its reports consistent with any legal constraints.

As you know, we have been involved in oversight for Sheriff's agencies in Los Angeles, Orange, Santa Clara, and Sant Cruz Counties and have found that oversight can increase trust and contribute to accountability and progressive policing. Our oversight work with Sheriff's Offices for over 20 years has not hurt deputy morale or caused any disruption in staffing or the effective functioning of those agencies. Robust but not unduly intrusive oversight can and has benefitted the working conditions of deputies as trust in those organizations increases.

We have not been privy to the detailed oversight proposal of your group in San Mateo County and thus express no opinion on the specifics. Those details are critical in whether oversight will be effective and fulfill the desired objectives of building trust in all San Mateo communities in its County's law enforcement responsibilities. We are hopeful that all stakeholders can work to develop an oversight entity that will satisfy those objectives.

Very truly yours,

//Michael Gennaco//

Michael Gennaco, Principal, OIR Group

## CEO\_BoardFeedback

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**From:** Janet Davis <jadjad@sbglobal.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 19, 2023 4:40 PM  
**To:** Dave Pine; Warren Slocum; CEO\_BoardFeedback  
**Cc:** Christina Corpus; Michael Callagy; Irving Torres  
**Subject:** Fixin' San Mateo

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### COMMENTS ON FIXIN' SAN MATEO

During the unfortunate tenure of Munks and Bolanos I believe there were gross violations of civil rights; discrimination; bias; selective enforcement of laws and police protection; malfeasance; problems in the jail; and favoritism within the ranks of the deputies. Under these two Sheriffs there also appeared to be a cabal of “Good Ole Boys” who rode roughshod over the rights of individuals – even within the department. Itself. This was seemingly condoned by the DA’s office on occasion. There was little anybody, including the Board of Supervisors, could do about it because the sheriff is an elected office. During that time several individuals were killed and the DA took no action against the officers responsible. *At that time an overview was required but did not happen.*

**That was then. The Batmobile scandal was the last straw.**

**THIS IS NOW:** In the last election, voters woke up and Irving Torres led a successful victory for Christina Corpus. She immediately undertook various reforms and is a fierce advocate for the disadvantaged *and* for complying with the civil rights of arrestees and she appears to have raised morale within the dept. She has instituted job training for inmates; fentanyl addiction therapy for inmates; encouraged medical personnel to deal with mental health issues instead of (or with,) deputies; reached out to communities; tried to increase staffing of all ethnic backgrounds; and set about instituting transparency models.

### PROBLEMS WITH THE FIXIN' CONCEPT NOW IN SAN MATEO:

1. I don't believe it is needed in San Mateo although it would seem to be beneficial in Vallejo and Oakland.
2. Requesting *a budget of \$2.5 million is totally ridiculous*. The Grand Jury which is usually made up of highly skilled people, works extremely hard to research issues and provide detailed reports without compensation; many City Council members spend many hours/week devoted to city issues without pay; numerous county committee members spend a considerable amount of their free time working without pay on county issues. If you care enough about an issue you should be willing to work for the public good on that issue. You certainly should not be paid \$500 for showing up to a meeting: that is idiotic.
3. Having 11 members of any committee is a guarantee that it will be unworkable.



4. There is no guarantee that any potential member will be qualified to work on any such committee, or have the relevant qualifications. My memory of the proposed draft ordinance is that the group wants to engage ex offenders and non citizens. That is hardly likely to inspire anybody's confidence in their neutrality or ability to analyze the relevant laws.
5. The draft ordinance was a joke and unenforceable. I read one version that was 14 pages long.
6. As I remember the draft ordinance, it assigned some responsibility for SO policies to the Fixin Committee. I do not believe that to be appropriate. If you elect a Sheriff you should have enough confidence in that person to trust their ability to make appropriate policies. Otherwise, given the proposed selection of the group, it could create a "fox guarding the hen house" situation.
7. What would seem to be more appropriate is to have a review board should any apparent major abuse of someone's civil rights, or unnecessary injury of death occur. Even then there are other alternatives such as civil suits.
8. What is the point of this board? It would appear to be impotent absent some control over the DA office and that is not possible.

**Bottom Line:** This group is obviously well meaning but I believe their focus is misplaced and unnecessary given the present Sheriff. To toss away \$2.5 million of taxpayers' money on this unneeded enterprise is silly when it could be better spent on, for example, job training for inmates, education for deputies, or addiction therapy for inmates.

## CEO\_BoardFeedback

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**From:** Janet Davis <jadjad@sbglobal.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 19, 2023 7:52 PM  
**To:** CEO\_BoardFeedback; Warren Slocum; Dave Pine  
**Subject:** Example of Sheriff Office Outreach to Community

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As an example of the difference between the way Bolanos and Corpus deal with the community is an entry on Nextdoor today and a reason why I think "Fixin'" is not needed:



[San Mateo County Sheriff's Office](#)



[Captain Matthew Fox](#) •

10 hr ago

The Sheriff's Office is excited to introduce "Officer Survey," a valuable tool for engaging with the communities we serve. In our commitment to transparency, we recognize the importance of giving the community a voice and actively listening to their feedback. After any interaction with the Sheriff's Office, our personnel can provide members of the public with a QR-coded business card, which will enable the recipient to fill out and submit an electronic survey detailing their experience about when we exceeded their expectations or if we have an area for improvement. Utilizing electronic surveys is an intentional and meaningful approach to measuring the quality of services being provided. These customer service surveys offer a streamlined avenue for feedback. They are widely acknowledged as a standard mechanism for receiving feedback on performance, and our "Officer Survey" initiative will enable us to do so in a more efficient and effective manner. Sheriff Corpus, an unwavering advocate of outreach and giving our community a voice, stated, "Asking for timely feedback after an interaction with members of the Sheriff's Office will not only allow us to effectively review and address potential gaps in certain areas, but also to highlight and recognize our employees for excellence in customer service and community engagement." The San Mateo County Sheriff's Office strongly values public input and insight. Your participation and meaningful feedback will enable us to continue providing the highest level of support and service. We believe in giving the community a platform to influence positive change and improvements. The survey results will be compiled and thoroughly reviewed by members of the Sheriff's Office. This process will ensure that we are serving and leading with our core values of dignity, compassion, and respect. Your input guides our commitment to excellence and drives our continuous improvement efforts.

## CEO\_BoardFeedback

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**From:** Victoria Sanchez De Alba <victoria@dealba.net>  
**Sent:** Saturday, October 21, 2023 9:18 PM  
**To:** CEO\_BoardFeedback  
**Subject:** Support on Independent Oversight of the Sherriff's Office

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Dear Board of Supervisors:

My name is Victoria Sanchez De Alba and I am in favor on Independent Oversight of the Sheriff's Office.

San Mateo County has a substantial population of non-white communities, communities of color. If we do not address the issue of inequitable treatment of non-whites, it will become worse.

Non-whites are at mortal risk. In our five local counties, Black people are less than 7% of the population, but make up 27% of people killed by police between 2015 and 2020 [1](#). Law enforcement officers in San Mateo County used tasers to kill three unarmed people of color in 2018 alone [2](#).

Despite 19 use-of-force deaths, **no** law enforcement officers in San Mateo County have been charged for a lethal use of force during District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe's 11 years in office [3](#).

Black and Brown, non-whites are at higher risk of arrest. Black people are nine times more likely to be arrested in San Mateo County than White people, and Latinos are twice as likely to be arrested as White people [4](#).

Is this systemic racism? How can we stop perpetuating it? We strongly need oversight to restore confidence and trust in law enforcement. Most importantly, we need it to ensure that our county government is respecting the rights of all residents. We are all human!

### Citations

1. [Exclusive: Blacks are only 7% of the Bay Area, but 27% of those killed by police](#): San Jose Mercury News
2. [Calls for video release mount after California county's third Taser-related death](#): CBS News
3. [Fewer than 10 percent of San Mateo County police use-of-force cases end in jury trial. Here's why](#): Half Moon Bay Review
4. [New Insights into California Arrests: Trends, Disparities, and County Differences](#): Public Policy Institute of California

I please urge you to do right for ALL residents in San Mateo County with 21st century policies.

Warm Regards,

-Victoria

## CEO\_BoardFeedback

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**From:** Victoria Sanchez De Alba <victoria@dealba.net>  
**Sent:** Saturday, October 21, 2023 9:15 PM  
**To:** CEO\_BoardFeedback  
**Subject:** Support on Independent Oversight of the Sherriff's Office

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Dear Board of Supervisors:

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Non-whites are at mortal risk. In our five local counties, Black people are less than 7% of the population, but make up 27% of people killed by police between 2015 and 2020 <sup>1</sup>. Law enforcement officers in San Mateo County used tasers to kill three unarmed people of color in 2018 alone <sup>2</sup>.

Despite 19 use-of-force deaths, **no** law enforcement officers in San Mateo County have been charged for a lethal use of force during District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe's 11 years in office <sup>3</sup>.

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Is this systemic racism? How can we stop perpetuating it? We strongly need oversight to restore confidence and trust in law enforcement. Most importantly, we need it to ensure that our county government is respecting the rights of all residents. We are all human!

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4. [New Insights into California Arrests: Trends, Disparities, and County Differences](#): Public Policy Institute of California

I please urge you to do right for ALL residents in San Mateo County with 21 century policies.

Warm Regards,

-Victoria

## CEO\_BoardFeedback

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**From:** Cathy Baird <cathy\_baird@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, October 22, 2023 11:53 AM  
**To:** CEO\_BoardFeedback  
**Subject:** Independent Civilian Oversight: we still need it

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Supervisors:

I am in favor of independent civilian oversight of the Sheriff's Office. I would like to address a couple of points I have heard in opposition to parts of that proposal.

I am going to say outright that I campaigned for Sheriff Corpus last year and support her efforts to reform and update the Sheriff's Office. **But just because we have a new sheriff, it does not mean we don't need independent civilian oversight.** Establishing Oversight is not a vote of no confidence for the current Sheriff. It is a commitment to good government now and into the future, no matter who holds the office. With the positive changes she is making, this is a good time to establish such a program.

The other point I have heard is that we don't need independent civilian oversight because the Sheriff has set up CARE. But CARE is **not independent**; community members are appointed by the Sheriff. It is also **not oversight** — they cannot take independent action to perform investigations, gain access to internal documents, make independent recommendations, or provide independent information to the public.

The strongest reason I became a supporter of independent civilian oversight was the death of Chinedu Okobi. That whole tragic event could have been changed at many points, starting with the fact that the sheriffs contacting him in the first place. From the videos I eventually saw in the news, he was not "acting erratically" until after contact. He was Black and on the spectrum, and his reactions were a result of their contact. His death occurred as a result of multiple Taser shots, which was against even federal recommendations at the time. (I researched that and brought it up with my supervisor Don Horsley.) Fortunately, the SMC Taser use policy was updated and sheriff training was also updated. My point is that although independent civilian oversight would not have changed the fact that Okobi died, there would have been more transparency and accountability.

I hope to attend your study session on Tuesday, but I'm involved in a long jury selection process and do not know whether I will be able to attend.

Thanks for your consideration.

Cathy Baird  
San Carlos

## CEO\_BoardFeedback

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**From:** Mary Ellen Davis <mepickettdavis@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 23, 2023 10:40 AM  
**To:** CEO\_BoardFeedback  
**Subject:** Citizens' Oversight Mommitter

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Please know that I wholeheartedly support the Citizens Oversight Committee and look forward to its complete implementation.

Mary Ellen Davis



## CEO\_BoardFeedback

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**From:** Joe Totah <joetotah@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 23, 2023 10:54 AM  
**To:** CEO\_BoardFeedback  
**Subject:** Citizens Oversight of Sherrif Dept

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Dear Supervisors Corzo, Canepa, Muller, Pine and Slocum,

I know you are considering creating a citizens oversight board and I have no doubt it's well meaning, but it will cause more harm than good for the following reasons:

1. This will take a toll on recruiting as it will be a huge negative for any recruit if they are going to be unfairly scrutinized or even fairly scrutinized after they made a split second decision that law enforcement officers often must make. Why go into public law enforcement when there are other options for them in the private sector? Let's never ever dig ourselves in a hole in this very tight employment market by making it impossible to recruit because a hostile working environment due to oversight that will be likely be biased in favor of a criminal.
2. This will bring down moral and we will lose officers and deputies to other departments. This will make my 1<sup>st</sup> point even worse.
3. Why is it okay for have oversight for law enforcement and not the Board of Supervisors, not the hospital staff (they commit malpractice) or any other department of the county? To selectively choose one department in the County would be inappropriately discriminating against those in the Sherrif's department.
4. Any wrongdoing by the department staff is reviewed by the DA's office whom the people elected.

The bottom line is, I want our law enforcement that is going to be staffed and that is going to help minimize crime. I don't want frustrated law enforcement officials who only show up for a paycheck and have no interest in protecting the people because they are afraid they will be judged harshly. Also please note this is the path that San Francisco has taken and look where the city is today? Nobody wants to go there and people are fleeing, that is the net result of being so one sided and being biased in favor of the people that create the problems. Let's not make the same huge mistakes that San Francisco has made, the costs are enormous. Thank you for you attention to this matter.

Regards,  
Joseph Totah  
San Mateo

## CEO\_BoardFeedback

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**From:** Clara Jaeckel <claraejaeckel@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 23, 2023 3:07 PM  
**To:** Dave Pine; Warren Slocum; David Canepa; Noelia Corzo; Ray Mueller;  
CEO\_BoardFeedback  
**Subject:** Public comment for 10/24 study session: Support strong independent oversight of the Sheriff's Office

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My name is Clara Jaeckel and I've lived in San Mateo County for 26 years. I'm a member of the organization In Our Care, and of the Coalition for a Safer San Mateo County, all of whom are calling for independent civilian oversight of the Sheriff's Office. As a resident of Redwood City, I am proud that the City Council of Redwood City has also voted to support oversight. I want to thank the Board for taking the initial steps in last year's vote. Now I urge you to complete the process to put an oversight board and inspector in place.

I attended memorial services earlier this month observing the fifth anniversary of the death of Chinedu Okobi, and I heard many Black San Mateo County residents speak out there to say they do not feel safe interacting with the Sheriff's Office and deputies here in their own home county. This is devastating, and we need to respond create trust by establishing the accountability and transparency that our government expects from public officials.

In order to do so, we need true independent oversight with authority to investigate concerns and make public reports and recommendations. To be effective, the oversight board and inspector must not be part of the sheriff's office itself, but set up separately. They need to have sufficient funding from the county to do their work, and be part of the county's regular operations, so that there is no delay or doubt about the need to start ad hoc investigations, and so that county residents can rely on accountability for the sheriff's office regardless of who the current sheriff is.

So I urge you to listen to the many residents and organizations who are part of the Coalition for a Safer San Mateo County and move forward with passing a strong ordinance for civilian oversight this year.

Thank you,  
Clara Jaeckel  
Redwood City