



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
DISTRICT 2
File #: 24-875

Board Meeting Date: 11/13/2024

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisor Noelia Corzo, District 2
Supervisor Ray Mueller, District 3

Subject: Resolution Stating Board of Supervisors' Position of No Confidence in the Sheriff

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution:

- A) Stating the Board of Supervisors' position of no confidence in Sheriff Christina Corpus; and
- B) Calling on Sheriff Corpus to resign; and
- C) Directing staff to transmit the report of independent investigation prepared by Judge LaDoris Cordell to the San Mateo County District Attorney, the California Attorney General, and other local government agencies; and
- D) Directing staff to transmit the report of independent investigation to the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury; and
- E) Affirming authorization of release of the report of independent investigation; and
- F) Directing staff to prepare an ordinance to place before the San Mateo County voters an amendment to the San Mateo County Charter to allow removal of the Sheriff by the Board of Supervisors upon a finding of good cause.

BACKGROUND:

Chapter 2.14 of the San Mateo County Ordinance Code ("Ordinance Code"), provides, among other things, that anyone who believes that a San Mateo County officer or employee has engaged in improper governmental activity should file with the designated County Office a report to complain about such improper activity. The Ordinance Code also provides that when complaints are received, the County shall investigate them and that retaliation or reprisal by any County officer or employee

against any complainant or informant in connection with a complaint submitted pursuant to Chapter 2.14 is strictly prohibited.

Chapter 2.14 of the Ordinance Code also mandates that, at the conclusion of any investigation pursuant to that chapter, the Board of Supervisors and other County leaders will take necessary steps to address improper governmental activity, including any necessary systemic changes to minimize or prevent reoccurrence of any improper activity.

The County Attorney's Office is presently responsible for overseeing the hot line to which complaints under Chapter 2.14 may be made.

DISCUSSION:

Complaints

Earlier this year, the County received many complaints alleging improper governmental activity, including, among other things, claims of harassment and mistreatment of, and retaliation against, employees of the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office ("Sheriff's Office") by Victor Aenlle, who was appointed by San Mateo County Sheriff Christina Corpus as the Executive Director of Administrative Services ("Executive Director") in the Sheriff's Office.

Judge Cordell Retained to Investigate

Given the need to investigate these complaints, the County Attorney retained Santa Clara County Superior Court Judge LaDoris H. Cordell (Ret.) to conduct an independent fact-finding investigation into these complaints and concerns. During the course of the investigation, additional matters regarding the Sheriff's Office were identified and included in the scope of the investigation.

Notably, Judge Cordell has extensive experience in law enforcement auditing and accountability, having served as the Independent Police Auditor for the San Jose Police Department. She also chaired the Santa Clara County Blue Ribbon Commission that evaluated that county's jails and she was one of three judges who served on a Blue Ribbon panel that evaluated the San Francisco Police Department. Importantly, Judge Cordell had no prior connection to any of the involved parties, including Mr. Aenlle, the Sheriff, the County Executive, or the County Attorney.

Investigation and Findings

Between July and November 2024, Judge Cordell undertook a painstaking and detailed independent investigation and she interviewed forty current and past civilian and sworn employees of the Sheriff's Office and reviewed a significant volume of documentary evidence. Judge Cordell has completed her investigation and she has prepared a detailed report of independent investigation ("Report of Independent Investigation").

Among the findings that Judge Cordell sets forth in the Report of Independent Investigation is that, despite their denials, Sheriff Corpus and Ms. Aenlle have a personal relationship beyond mere friendship and that, in fact, the evidence establishes that they have had an intimate relationship. Judge Cordell also finds that the actions to hire, directly supervise and recommend pay increases for Mr. Aenlle give rise to a conflict of interest.

Judge Cordell also finds that the Sheriff and her current executive team have engaged in retaliation and intimidation, including against employees who participated in an investigation authorized pursuant to Chapter 2.14 of the Ordinance Code. For example, she found that the firing of Assistant Sheriff Ryan Monaghan was in retaliation for his participation the independent investigation that

Judge Cordell was conducting. Judge Cordell also found that Mr. Aenlle exceeded and/or abused his authority with the approval of Sheriff Corpus. Judge Cordell further found that Sheriff Corpus has uttered and texted racial and homophobic slurs in the workplace.

Given her findings, Judge Cordell concludes that the Sheriff's office harbors a hostile, retaliatory and abusive working environment, leaving the office's employees severely demoralized. She notes that since Sheriff Corpus took office, at least 106 sworn staff members, from the rank of Correctional Officer to Undersheriff, have departed the office, and that approximately half of these individuals were not eligible to retire. Judge Cordell also noted that the Deputy Sheriffs Association overwhelmingly adopted a no-confidence motion against Mr. Aenlle. She states that "lies, secrecy, intimidation, retaliation, conflicts of interest and abuse of authority are the hallmarks of the Corpus administration," and that "nothing short of new leadership can save this organization" and she recommends that Sheriff Corpus step down and that Mr. Aenlle's employment with the Sheriff's Office be terminated immediately.

We also have observed that there has been an alarming turnover in senior leadership staff in the Sheriff's Office, with numerous highly regarded senior leaders, including many selected by Sheriff Corpus, either resigning or being forced out of or being reassigned from their positions.

Next Steps

Given the foregoing, we request that the Board of Supervisors adopt a resolution that does the following:

- Sets forth the Board's position of "no confidence" in Sheriff Corpus and calls on Sheriff Corpus to resign her position.
- Directs the County Executive to transmit a copy of the Report of Independent Investigation to the California Attorney General, to the San Mateo County District Attorney, and to all local government agencies in San Mateo County.
- Directs the County Executive to cause a copy of the Report of Independent Investigation to the Civil Grand Jury.
- Affirms the Board's authorization of release of the Report of Independent Investigation.
- Directs the County Executive and the County Attorney to prepare and bring to the Board for consideration an ordinance that would place before the San Mateo County voters an amendment to the San Mateo County Charter to authorize the Board of Supervisors, on a 4/5ths vote, to remove the County Sheriff for good cause, including, but not limited to, violation of laws, policies, or procedures related to the Sheriff's duties; repeated neglect of duties; misuse of public funds or property; obstruction or attempts to obstruct an investigation into the department's conduct; or other conduct unbecoming an elected official.