

Public Comment - Public Safety - SBCTAC

From: mikestoker@aol.com
To: sbcob
Subject: SBCTAC Opposes the recommended cuts to the Sheriffs budget...(6/16 & 6/18)
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"The SBCTAC...Fighting for the Taxpayer and Helping our Businesses Succeed..."

Dear Chairman Nelson and Honorable Board Members:

At your upcoming Budget Hearing on June 16th and 18th, you will have a recommendation to essentially cut the Sheriff's budget by \$5 million. This would require the Sheriff to cut 30 positions, including 11 sworn (1 lieutenant, 2 sergeants, 1 senior deputy, 7 deputy sheriffs), and convert one Records sergeant to a civilian position. **This will have a DEVASTATING impact on public safety.**

On behalf of the Santa Barbara Taxpayer Advocacy Center (SBCTAC) and our over

350 members, we strongly oppose this recommendation and urge the Board to reject it as well. The problem with your **'across the board one size fits all'** recommendation is that it assumes that every General Fund county department is operating at equal efficiency and assumes all GF departments are of equal priority. This reminds me of when I was on the County Board of Supervisors in 1990, when the county faced a 20% budget deficit, the County Administrator recommended all county departments take a 20% cut in their budget. I strongly objected and said the same thing then as I am saying now, that assumes everyone is equally efficient and equally important. I reminded my colleagues that when a town in the west was formed, the first person hired was the Sheriff, the next were the Deputy Sheriffs, and of equal importance was creating the volunteer fire department. Nothing has changed since that time; **our cops and firefighters (public safety) in the eyes of the public still remain the #1 priority and should be treated as such in the budget process.**

The SBCTAC is very concerned that this Board has retreated to the Board I sat on. Ironically, at that time, while I was in the minority, the majority ranked county priorities, and public safety came in #5 out of 7. I made it a huge issue in that budget cycle, and two candidates (Staffel and Chamberlin) running for office against two of the incumbents that supported ranking public safety #5 (Owens and Wallace), made public safety their number one issue in their campaigns, and, as a result, they won, unseating two incumbents.

I mention this because it appears this Board no longer considers public safety THE #1 priority. When asked recently at a hearing what each of the supervisors' top priority was, only one (Chairman Nelson) said public safety. For the other four, it was everything from animal shelters to child welfare. While the SBCTAC agrees these are all important issues, NONE of them rival public safety. I have no doubt that if a survey of voters in each of the supervisorial districts were conducted, public safety would come in #1 on their list, as it should be #1 on YOUR list.

The SBCTAC would ask you not to flat-line the budget for the Sheriff and instead take cuts from other departments that rely on the GF. Also, I would like to bring up the issue of oil & gas. The fact is that Sable will pay the county this year \$5 million dollars to the county in property taxes if they keep producing at the current production rate. If they increase it to the level they want, that number could reach \$10 million dollars. It is estimated that the county will generate an additional \$25-\$30 million dollars if you add Sable and approve the loading rack for Sentinel Peak in Lompoc,

and approve the project E & B Resources is advocating in Cuyama. **Can you imagine where your board would be at this point if you had an additional 20-30 million dollars to work with in the budget?**

However, you are doing just the opposite. Instead of supporting oil & gas, you are trying to shut it down. Soon, you will have a proposed ordinance to prohibit the drilling of new oil wells. (This passed in the Planning Commission recently on a 3-2 vote.) And next, you will consider an amortization ordinance that will shut down existing oil operations altogether. All of these will have the direct consequence of even less money for the board in future budget cycles, making your job that much harder. The SBCTAC would urge the Board to reconsider your anti-oil & gas policies and consider supporting domestic production until the time comes that CA doesn't need to import one barrel of oil a day. (As you all know, CA now imports more than 60% of its oil from foreign countries, primarily Iraq and Brazil, which gets its oil from cutting down the rainforests. And you are also aware that oil imported in foreign oil tankers is much worse for the environment and the carbon footprint than oil produced in CA and transported by pipeline.)

The SBCTAC strongly urges you to support the restorations for the Sheriff's budget. **If you do proceed with these cuts, the SBCTAC urges your Board to commit in the mid-year to earmarking 100% of the unexpected revenues from property tax dollars that come from Sable to restore the funding you are cutting from the Sheriff's budget.**

Sincerely,
Mike Stoker
President & CEO, SBCTAC