

Ramirez, Angelica

Public Comment

LATE DIST

From: Alexander, Jacquelyne  
Sent: Friday, June 12, 2020 9:10 AM  
To: sbcob  
Subject: FW: Comment on BLM Demands and Recommendations for Local Police/Sheriff's Office Reform

Please add to record.

Thank you,



Jacquelyne Alexander  
Chief Deputy Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
County of Santa Barbara  
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From: County Executive Office <caoemail@co.santa-barbara.ca.us>  
Sent: Friday, June 12, 2020 8:52 AM  
To: Alexander, Jacquelyne <jralexander@countyofsb.org>; Lenzi, Chelsea <clenzi@countyofsb.org>; de la Guerra, Sheila <sdelaguerra@countyofsb.org>  
Subject: FW: Comment on BLM Demands and Recommendations for Local Police/Sheriff's Office Reform

From: Rima Villarreal <villarrealrima@gmail.com>  
Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2020 5:23 PM  
To: County Executive Office <caoemail@co.santa-barbara.ca.us>  
Subject: Comment on BLM Demands and Recommendations for Local Police/Sheriff's Office Reform

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Dear County Board of Supervisors,

I am a woman of color and a resident in Santa Barbara. I was not aware of the meeting in time to submit a public comment to the Clerk by the 5pm deadline yesterday, and was at work this afternoon and unable to call in.

I want to vocalize my support for the Healing Justice: Black Lives Matter movement and their demands made to the County.

I also want to take this opportunity to make some comments on statements made by Sheriff Bill Brown at the recent Special City Council Meeting for the City of Goleta.

He stated the data regarding police use of force by race was not readily available either to him/the Sheriff's Office, or the public. He referred to the time and expense of gathering and consolidating the data, and budget constraints. With all due respect, this information is **essential**. In order to determine if racial discrimination in terms of police brutality and law enforcement actions exist in this County, and at what levels, the **bare minimum** we need is information. The data **needs** to be collected, assessed by the County Board of Supervisors, and provided to the public. There is no transparency or accountability possible without taking that basic first step. In what other County division/department would it be acceptable to not have such critical data relating to the department's overall function? In what other department and division would it be acceptable to not have an assessment and evaluative system in place, and neither assess nor disseminate and make public such data? **Why, in a civilized nation, would we not hold our law enforcement, members of which are capable of lawfully determining life and death of the citizens they are tasked to serve and protect, to the highest standards of transparency and accountability we are capable of?**

**We are in the middle of the single largest global civil rights protest in history**, stemming from repeated instances of police brutality and unjustified killings against black people, piled upon the foundation of a nation and society founded on genocidal efforts and racist practices. Please review the budget of the Sheriff's Office with this in mind. Please acknowledge where our community is at this time in history, and how we got here. Please analyze and dissect the County Sheriff's budget with the same effort, care and rigor that you would make if your child was black - if George Floyd was your son. If Ahmaud Arbery were your son. If Breonna Taylor was your daughter.

Sheriff Brown also stated that we do not see the issues affecting cities 'thousands of miles away' in terms of police brutality and law enforcement discrimination based on race. This statement minimizes this crisis, and is also questionable. Especially since we don't have the data. There have been a number of deputies and staff arrested in the Sheriff's Office and locally in the last two decades following rape and sexual assault of community members, including minors, who were under their power. Los Angeles with a dark history of racial discrimination and disturbing rates of police brutality is our neighbor. Megan Hockaday grew up in Santa Barbara. Police in Vallejo, CA just killed 22 year old Sean Monterrosa, who was on his knees with his arms up a mere one week ago. It makes no sense to claim our local law enforcement is not touched in some form by systemic racism. And we should make every effort to gut this from our community.

Sheriff Brown also defended the use of the word 'should' as opposed to 'shall' in the excessive use policy in terms of not using excessive force. The beginning of the policy states 'When safe and reasonable . . .' If safe and reasonable, why on earth would we hold onto the word 'should' as opposed to 'shall'? There is a world of difference between those words. Sheriff Bill Brown stated an attorney categorized the two terms as 'nearly interchangeable,' and that 'should' offers law enforcement 'a little more flexibility.' Why would flexibility be what we seek in harming civilians if 'safe and reasonable' not to? If safe and reasonable, do not harm people. That is a basic philosophy that should be absolutely, fully, 100% held by all members of our law enforcement. Sheriff Brown's support of the word is disturbing.

*I want to tell you as someone who has witnessed it firsthand, that police brutality exists in the local community. When I was 10 years old in this community, I called the police on my mentally ill father because he was severely physically abusing my mother. My father is a dark skinned indigenous man. In the mid-90s the laws and measures that exist now for domestic violence did not exist then, and*

*thus whenever my mom called the police on my dad he simply left before their arrival to our home, and faced no punishment. This time I called them. And this time, maybe because it was the only time one of his children made the call, he did not run. I watched from my bedroom window as he stood in the front yard. I watched the police officers approach him and order him to place his hands above his head and turn around. I watched him place his hands above his head and turn around, exactly as directed. I watched an officer then come from behind him and sweep his leg violently under my father, knocking my father off his feet, slamming his head against the curb in front of our home, knocking out three teeth from his head. I watched the officer laugh and shackle him, my father visibly disoriented and in pain, as blood streamed from his head. When my father was released, he described additional abuses he sustained after arrest at the hands of both police and jail staff, including excessive force, taunting and sexual assault. My father is many things, but he is not a liar. And I fully believe him.*

*Think about what this does to a 10 year old girl who was trying to protect her mother, who loved her father. Who trusted the police, who thought their arrival meant the stoppage of unnecessary violence. Think of the impact the officer responsible had on me. This, and 2 other instances, out of an estimated 20 or so instances I have had contact with police officers in my life, always in the role as a victim, are seared in my mind. I witnessed domestic violence all my life, I experienced it as an adult. And the relationship I have with the police is the same as I have with my abuser. As a collective force, 90% of the time they have not harmed me, they have helped me, they have been proper and nonviolent. 10% they exhibited excessive force or inappropriate sexual contact. And that 10% drives the need for caution, for hypervigilance. For fear. Just like an abusive partner. As we look at the parallels here, it is worth noting that about 40% of police officers commit domestic violence, and that is domestic violence that is tracked/reported. Does this fact speak to something inherently wrong in the culture, in the system? Something that impacts the principles and results of immense power and control, and the propensity/probability of abusing someone vulnerable, whether they be a partner, a spouse, the parent of your child, or a member of the community who falls under your control for a criminal issue?*

I just listened to a member of the Board of Supervisors speak as he exited the meeting early. I want to emphasize that during public comment, a number of reasonable and realistic measures to addressing potential abuses of excessive force and impacts of systemic racism have been presented. I want to point out that defunding is not synonymous with dismantling or complete abolishment. Defunding means no additional funding, or decreases in funding with reallocation to more effective community based public health and safety alternatives, such as investment in mental health and substance abuse issues.

In addition to the excellent suggestions made by the public, such as training on deescalation measures, creation of a civilian review board, no quarantine or isolation for inmates awaiting trial or to talk to lawyers, banning of chokeholds and other controversial methods of restraint and force, and prioritization of alternatives to incarceration, please consider the following reasonable and practical measures:

- Review the accountability clauses of the union contracts of local law enforcement, ensure accountability clauses facilitate high levels of accountability**
- Predictive policing, comprehensive tracking of citizen complaints against officers and incidents of improper use of force, with strong disciplinary and termination measures in place for those who commit multiple acts**

I am going to close today with another emphasis on where we are in history. Minneapolis is dismantling its police department. Camden, NJ has already done so and experienced huge decreases in crime and overall benefit. Protesters in Seattle have occupied City Hall and taken over a precinct. There are peaceful protests all over the nation AND world. There are some protests that have turned violent, often at the hands of law enforcement - shooting tear gas and rubber bullets at peaceful protests, in the case of Sarah Grossman killing

her. In the case of many others, maiming them, severely wounding them, harming them. There is mass traumatization by police happening NOW. We are blessed and fortunate that the protests locally have been peaceful, to the level of which the youth and families can safely attend. We must acknowledge the public is demanding real, substantial action and reform. We must acknowledge that though our protests are peaceful, our pain and passion are no less. Know that this stance and this movement may very well be the single most impactful one you address in your lives, in your careers as civil and public servants. What is the legacy you want to make, what is the impact you will tell your children and grandchildren and great grandchildren? Again, please navigate through this decision with your authority as if your children were black. Put yourselves in the places of the parents of the recent black homicide victims at the hands of police - do what you would do if you were them. This is a way to temper outrage with love.

**"Our world is on fire. And the people we love are burning." ~ Sandra Cisneros**

Sincerely,

Rima Rocio Villarreal  
Santa Barbara Resident