



**SILICON VALLEY  
PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY  
FOUNDATION**

2022 Sheriff Candidate Questionnaire

**Bob Jonsen**

**1. What makes you the best candidate for Sheriff and what is your personal experience with leading a large and diverse organization? Please list any major accomplishments.**

I bring a unique background and perspective to this race. I am the only candidate with executive experience in both a sheriff's organization and municipal police department. My 36 years in the profession includes valuable experience from three agencies – the largest sheriff's department in the world (LASD), a very small department of Menlo Park, and the past four years in an extremely engaged and progressive city - Palo Alto.

My time in Los Angeles allowed me to gain invaluable experience by working a variety of assignments to include custody (as a deputy and manager), four patrol stations at every level (deputy to captain), Advance Training Bureau, Administrative Services Bureau, Regional Community Policing Institute, Antelope Valley Crime Fighting Initiative, and finally as he Captain of Lancaster Station.

My assignments over the years prepared me well to become Chief of Police for the Menlo Park Police Department in 2013. In my five years with the MPPD team we developed innovative approaches to reducing crime, formed collaborations with the community and businesses, and engaged our residents in ongoing opportunities to really connect with the men and women serving their community. These efforts ultimately led to our department receiving the Helen Putnam Award for Excellence in Public Safety and the IACP Award for Community Policing.

I became the Chief of Police for the City of Palo Alto in 2018 and we immediately began a rebuilding process by filling vacancies, creating opportunities for the workforce, and were moving in a very positive direction until the pandemic led to significant budget reductions.

Yet we endured and our progressive approach has better positioned the organization to meet the expectations of the community moving forward as we begin to rebuild internally once again. I also have been in a law enforcement executive leadership position during the past two years, actively engaged in the conversations around accountability, transparency, and police reform - listening, engaging, and acting. Being the department representative in some very uncomfortable conversations that needed to be had, allowed for incredible, open dialogue leading to real change. We have worked through the most unprecedented and challenging issues our profession has experienced in years and we did this not only with the community, but internally as well. I am also a tremendous advocate for the wellbeing of our workforce. I believe for public service professionals to serve their community to the best of their ability they need to be healthy both physically and psychologically. As a member of the California Police Chiefs' Officer Wellness Committee, I continue to work on finding evidence-based programs and solutions designed to enhance the wellbeing of our personnel so they can continue to serve our communities at the highest level of professionalism.

I am the only candidate that has navigated departments through challenging times of the past two years, balanced budgets, negotiated wage increases, and successfully advocated for a new public safety building to be built.

I understand the complexities associated with running a large organization which is multifaceted in the services it provides. I understand the need for community collaboration, and I understand the importance of changing how we serve our communities today.

**2. The current Sheriff's Office has many current problems, including the investigation into the issuance of CCW's exclusively for campaign contributions to Sheriff Laurie Smith. What do you believe are the biggest current problems within the Sheriff's Office, how will you fix them, and what will be your top three priorities if elected?**

I believe I am best suited to addressing the pressing issues facing the Santa Clara Sheriff's Department. Having worked the largest sheriff's department in the world (LASD) for 27 years, I understand the complexities associated with running a large organization which is multifaceted in the services it provides. Furthermore, my nine years as a Chief of Police have provided my invaluable experience and insight to getting projects and services approved and budgets balanced. My efforts in workforce resilience are also an asset, because the past couple of years have been extremely challenging for our employees and they deserve to work in an environment that mitigates stress rather than aggravates the nervous system. I was motivated to enter the race because the Santa Clara Sheriff's Department has been under tremendous scrutiny over the past several years and the outstanding men and women working there deserve leadership that is engaged within the department and their wellbeing as individuals. The community deserves a Sheriff, with a progressive approach and who is open to reform, transparency, and collaboration.

The law enforcement profession has had numerous laws passed over the past two years and many agencies have not adequately adjusted their internal protocols to align with the new legislative orders. My priority will be to ensure we are in compliance with, and engaged in, the necessary legislative reforms that still need to be addressed. My top three areas of focus will

be: ***Mental Health Response; Expanding Transparency and Accountability; and Creating Safer Communities.***

**3. There are currently 2 existing Consent Decrees, from prior lawsuits which the County has agreed to (Chavez v. County of Santa Clara and Cole v. County of Santa Clara). Has enough been done to address those issues and what will you do if elected to ensure compliance?**

I have always set the standard, both internally and externally, of compliance to policies; protocols; law and to be respectful, fair, impartial, and free of bias when applying them. It's that simple, and as I mentioned in the first question, as soon as I take command of a new department, I have always conducted one-on-one meetings with every employee to outline my expectations. From that moment on if someone chooses to not meet the established standards then I have no problem holding them accountable. And I have done so in every agency I've worked. New Leadership can change the direction of an organization and I look forward to doing just that.

**4. As you are probably aware, the California Department of Justice has opened a Patterns and Practice investigation into our Sheriff's Office to investigate allegations relating to conditions of confinement in its jail facilities, resistance to lawful oversight, and other misconduct. How do you intend to implement any meaningful change at the Sheriff's Office while this investigation is occurring? \***

In 2011, I was the Captain of Lancaster Station in Los Angeles. I was assigned there to work with the California Department of Justice who was conducting Patterns and Practice Investigation. It was a challenging time because you had to manage both workforce morale while working on implementing protocols to address the DOJ concerns. One of the things I facilitated was to implement a Chief's Advisory Group which was made up of residents and business owners. This is one of the first things I establish at every command and have done so in Los Angeles, Menlo Park and Palo Alto.

The relationship between the Santa Clara Sheriff's Department and the Office of Correction and Law Enforcement Monitoring (OCLEM) has been slow to progress and one that will be dramatically improved because of my existing relationship with Mike Gennaco and his team. I worked with his team in Los Angeles and now in Palo Alto.

The call for greater oversight has served as catalysts for leaders at every level of government. I have worked with my city partners on the City's Race & Equity Framework and action plan, including reviewing policing practices, making changes to our use-of-force policies to reduce the potential for violence, and engaging the community in ongoing, thoughtful dialogue and leadership. As a partner in these conversations, I embraced change, listened to community experiences, collaboratively shared information, and worked closely with elected officials, community leaders, and residents to advance collective goals. Opening our doors, rather than closing them to the outside, is vital to transparency. I will bring this same openness to the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office as your Sheriff.

**5. We understand that the Sheriff's Office is currently understaffed with numerous deputies transferring to other agencies or putting in for retirement. What is your plan to retain officers and grow the department, what qualities and characteristics do you look for in deputies, and how many deputies do you need for your department to operate at appropriate efficiency?**

I had to address staffing issues with both Menlo Park and Palo Alto and successfully halted the exodus which was occurring prior to my arrival. I filled vacancies quickly by adjusting pay to the market level, creating opportunities for career development, and even introduced new positions into the organizations. New leadership can turn the tide quickly and even create a much needed internal energy focused on the new direction the Sheriff's Office will be going. I look for individuals committed to the mission of the organization, who are honest, hard working, positive, innovative, and approach things with a team mindset. Those qualities are a solid foundation for accomplishing just about anything we need to do.

The staffing for the SCSO is at dangerously low levels and needs to be addressed immediately. Operating a complex organization requires adequate staffing in order to prevent burnout of the existing workforce and to ensure the necessary work is being conducted. For an organization to thrive you need to be continually growing.

As I mentioned previously, I am a tremendous advocate for the wellbeing of our workforce, which I believe will also lead to less turnover. For our public service professionals to serve their community to the best of their ability, they need to be healthy, both physically and psychologically. As a member of the California Police Chiefs' Officer Wellness Committee, I continue to work on finding evidence-based programs and solutions designed to enhance the wellbeing of our personnel so they can continue to serve our communities at the highest level of professionalism.

**7. What is your stance on releasing convicted serious and violent criminals (undocumented) into the custody of Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE)?**

As you know, both Senate Bill 54 ("Sanctuary State" Bill) and California's Truth Act (2014), prescribes the extent in which law enforcement can cooperate with federal immigration authorities, primarily around honoring ICE detainers or requests to HOLD inmates beyond their release date. In 2017, while Chief at Menlo Park I worked with our city council to pass an ordinance codifying the law into local practices. For clarity we were able to notify ICE when a Serious Felony was involved. We did not work with ICE on a task force focused in Immigration enforcement.

In Santa Clara County a Resolution adopted in 2010 prohibits County employees from using County resources to inform federal immigration officers based on information acquired in the course of providing critical County services. That Resolution also prohibited County employees from contacting ICE based solely on an individual's actual or suspected immigration status. In 2019, I was part of the County Chiefs group to reaffirm that under no conditions would a person be contacted, detained, arrested, or have their custody time extended solely on their immigration status. And that incarcerated individuals could only be interviewed by ICE if they provided and signed a consent waiver. I will honor those agreements as the Sheriff of Santa Clara County. However, when the criteria are met for notification to ICE on serious felonies then I will also honor established policies and protocols to ensure our communities remain safe.

**8. There will be times when you will disagree with the Board of Supervisors policy directions. What will you do to maintain a strong working relationship with the Board when you disagree, especially if you feel their decision puts our county at risk?**

I have been in these situations many times and I was, and continue to be, engaged around the topic of police reform. Conversations where many different positions were taken. When the nationwide movement for criminal justice reform began in June 2020, I did not take a position on the sidelines, I leaned in with the Palo Alto City Council, City leadership, and executive leadership of the Police Department to engage in a series of public meetings to discuss police reform. On a regular and ongoing basis beginning in June 2020 and continuing through to this day, the Police Department has routinely participated in City Council meetings, Human Relations Commission meetings, and other community meetings to address any concerns in an initiative-taking and transparent manner.

In 2021, in response to increasing community calls for police accountability, I worked with City leadership and the City Council to dramatically expand the scope of investigations reviewed by the department's Independent Police Auditor (IPA).

I have listened to others' positions and found out what it is they want to achieve; we can usually find common ground.

**9. What is your plan to build community trust with the two million residents of Santa Clara County?**

As I mentioned, one of the things I implement are Chief's Advisory Groups made up of residents and business owners. I have done so at every command in Los Angeles, Menlo Park and Palo Alto. I will do so in each of our patrol areas under Santa Clara County Sheriff's jurisdiction. These groups build trust quickly because they are involved in crime reduction strategies, policy consideration, and educational opportunities. They are direct connections with the SCSO and vital for operating as liaisons for their neighborhoods.

**10. Major violent crimes in San Jose and Silicon Valley have increased since the implementation of Propositions 47, 57, and AB109. As an elected official, would you use your position to advocate for changes to these laws, and if so what would you want changed?**

It's my role to enforce the law, not change it. I occupy a non-partisan position. I will however build relationships with elected officials that allow me to present them with the best available information on the challenges we face in the field, just as I have done as Chief over the last nine years. I believe there needs to be accountability when someone chooses to commit a crime. However, overturning some of the laws we have today will be challenging and we just saw a bill advocating simple adjustments to property related crimes (AB1603 proposed by Assemblymember Salas) pulled from the Public Safety Committee in Sacramento last week. Therefore, we have to address crime impacting our communities more strategically. As mentioned earlier, I was the coordinator for Antelope Valley Crime Fighting Initiative in Los Angeles for three years and successfully reduced crime in several areas which ultimately led to

the initiative receiving statewide recognition. I applied the same strategic approach while at Menlo Park. Our success led to both state and national recognition. We can apply some of those same strategies in Santa Clara County.

**11. A recent major decision with the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors involved either building a new jail or constructing a new mental health facility. If elected, what can you do to improve mental health care services while in jail and lower the recidivism rate?**

A couple of weeks ago, Supervisor Ellenberg asked our County to invest in a continuum of care for individuals who are struggling with mental illnesses, or substance use disorders, by providing a care paradigm that ranges from secure, long term, inpatient care to step down residential centers to outpatient treatment in the community. This is a thoughtful approach that I support. We need to re-access how we approach mental health around the principles of "normalization" and "resocialization," aiming to close the gap between institutional conditions and conditions of life in free society.

We need to look at restructuring correctional facilities to educational facilities. I look to further the partnerships in place with the Sheriff's Programs Unit, exploring programs and services that will increase the ability to reduce recidivism, with an emphasis on programs that provide development, training, and educational services. In fact, I have already had several meetings evaluating Reentry training programs for justice-involved individuals. There is a tremendous demand for skilled workers, especially in the area of Green Workforce opportunities. Providing multiple training and educational opportunities will support our ongoing effort towards successful reentry into society, by equipping people with skills needed for sustainable employment. Those opportunities need to be available from day one of incarceration!

**12. SVPAF believes programs like Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) have failed in SCC because they are exceedingly expensive and enable homelessness by precluding treatment of its underlying causes: mental illness and substance abuse. Do you believe our position is correct? As Sheriff, what would your role be in advocating for a better response to homelessness?**

The issue of homelessness is a multifaceted one, and a growing concern in Santa Clara where 9 out of 10 residents believe homelessness is a serious problem for our region. The fact is we have over an estimated 11,000 homeless residents. The cause for 61% of people who are homeless has to do with drugs/alcohol; job loss; or incarceration. We must do better to stabilize those who are most vulnerable.

We had similar concerns in San Mateo when I was chief for Menlo Park. In MPPD we implemented a Six Goal Proposal in 2015 since Menlo Park police officers are often-times the first government official to make contact with a homeless person in the city, it makes sense for officers to examine the ways law enforcement personnel can learn about, and create solutions for the homeless population.

In Palo Alto we had the Special Projects Team that worked daily on homeless outreach with this same philosophy and now we have the PERT, who work in collaboration with the Department of Behavioral Health. As Sheriff I will ensure these partnerships continue to expand.

I also support Governor Newsom's proposal for establishing a Care Court to assist in finding suitable solutions for individuals suffering with mental health, alcohol, and drug addiction.

In November 2021 under my leadership, the Palo Alto Police Department launched its Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT), in which a police officer is paired with a licensed mental health clinician from the Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services Department. The team's primary objective is to provide rapid intervention to a person in a mental health crisis by de-escalating the situation, stabilizing it in the least restrictive way possible, and then working to get that person the help they need. PERT combines the unique resources available to each profession, coupled with the training and expertise of both the officer and clinician, to provide the highest possible level of service to someone experiencing a mental health crisis. The Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services Department recently announced the rollout of the Mobile Emergency Response Team which adds another option for individuals to utilize when experiencing a mental health crisis. I have, and will continue to advocate for greater funding associated with these types of programs to ensure the resources are available when people need them most.

**13. The city of SJ recently passed several gun control measures but critics have stated these laws unfairly target law abiding gun owners and do nothing to address violence in the city. If elected, how would you respond to these laws and what will you do to reduce major violent crimes in SCC?**

The topic of gun control and gun-related violence is one I have actively been involved in since the 1990s. As a deputy for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department I worked with the Los Angeles County Office of Education's Safe School Center to develop both educational training and diversion programs designed around preventing gun violence in our schools.

As a Sergeant, I coordinated town hall meetings during America's Safe Schools Week activities, which were intended to encourage local communities to develop and refine collaborative plans to reduce the incidence of bullying, gang activity, assault, and youth gun violence in their area.

I also wrote the official recommendation report for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department in 2001 identifying policies and protocols required to reduce incidents of violence in our schools. I also facilitated on "Institutional Violence" for the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) from 2001-2011.

Furthermore, as the Coordinator of the Antelope Valley Crime Fighting Initiative from 2008-2011, I developed comprehensive strategies designed to reduce gang related gun violence and homicides. We ultimately received the James Q. Wilson Award for the reductions made throughout the initiative.

Our work in reducing gang violence in Menlo Park also led to us receiving the Helen Putnam Award for Excellence in Public Safety and the International Police Chiefs Award for excellence in Community Policing.

I have always advocated for greater gun control, accountability, and diversion programs for first-time weapon offenders. As the Captain of Lancaster Station, I partnered with the University of Antelope Valley to provide scholarships to graduates of the Vital Intervention & Directional



Alternative program offered to youth offenders and facilitated through the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Collaborating with educational institutions to provide options for juvenile offenders, rather than incarceration, should always be the top priority!

Yet, with the recent rise in ghost guns we must ensure the current laws do not provide loopholes for these weapons to be continually produced and distributed. I have also supported GVRO and safe gun storage ordinances. I am not against the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment, just advocate for responsible ownership and accountability.