

Dear Mendocino County Board of Supervisors,

I am writing to you because it has come to my attention that you are considering a citizen's oversight committee for the sheriff's department. I was perplexed to hear this, because I was unaware that our sheriff's department has issues with police violence. Which from my understanding is why such committee's have been put into place in other departments in our state, and country. Do you believe that our sheriff's department has issues with police violence? I was also under the impression that the County already has policies in place to deal with this type of conduct. Having a redundant system in place for this non-issue, seems like a waste of tax dollars from a department that already has enough trouble with funding. In my 42 years as a resident of Mendocino County, I have yet to hear of a story of someone who was a victim of police brutality from our sheriff's department.

A quick Google search for "Police Civilian Oversight Committees", and about an hour of reading. Leads me to believe that on average they are expensive, and not very effective at dealing with the matters they are designed for. Article by Natalie Delgadillo May 25, 2017 quotes Tim Lynch, who has surveyed such bodies as part of his work as director of the Cato Institute's project on criminal justice. "I tend to be skeptical of the track record of civilian review boards. I think they have several weaknesses – they're very vulnerable to local political manipulations." Frontline's article by Priyanka Boghani July 13, 2016, states San Francisco's Office of Citizen Complaints (OCC) which was formed by a ballot initiative in 1982 in response to a series of allegations of police brutality. This vote made San Francisco an early adopter of civilian oversight, but the offices 33-year history has been checkered by ineffectiveness. I would suggest doing ones due diligence on this subject, before applying efforts and resources to something that is quite possibly ineffective.

When you spoke to the Sheriff about this, what was his opinion? If this committee is implemented, what will the cost be and how many deputies will we lose from the department? My town of Covelo, is in need of more law enforcement personnel, not less. Please don't let elected officials, public opinion, or policy makers from different states or cities, that do not reflect the views, circumstances, and issues in Mendocino County, affect your decisions on this.

Sincerely,

Bill Williamson

References:

Natalie Delgadillo article May 25, 2017

<https://www.governing.com/topics/public-justice-safety/gov-civilian-oversight-police-charter-amendment.html>

Frontline article by Priyanka Boghani. July 13, 2016

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/is-civilian-oversight-the-answer-to-distrust-of-police/>