

Dear Supervisors,

Rather than hiring 10 officers in the next three years, hiring trained social workers in the fields of substance abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse and assault, domestic violence, and homelessness/vagrancy to show up as first responders, will address the situations at hand in a more skilled and beneficial manner for everyone involved.

I ask that we seek such trained social worker first responders; if they would they could be available; how much of a salary they require and consider how they could be implemented into our response to the appropriate categories listed and charted as duties of the Sheriff's Department. These first responders would be able to call on police backup for help should the situation require it but they would most certainly take a major load off the Sheriff's department duties.

The funds saved from the millions of dollars currently budgeted for weapons, weapons training, specialized vehicles and clothing that 10 more officers would incur, could be used to hire more social worker first responders and would most certainly add to the mental and physical health of our community, as well as lighten the load of our Sheriff's department, letting him and his staff concentrate on the corporate illegal grows they speak of addressing.

This whole paradigm is of course equally dependent upon a mental health facility in our county and I certainly hope the facility that was asked for by our votes is still in the works. That one of our county's residents, documented to be mentally ill, has been in jail for weeks rather than in a mental institution is the underside, unseen but equally imperative reason for the need for this shift in our community's responding to calls for help.

As for the only two pictures in the sheriff's report, I understand Supervisor Williams has said the Sheriff is going to give us the context of the only two photographs at the meeting today. There can be no context for these two photos. Imminent Threat — a seemingly headless figure at night in the woods with a rifle; Appropriate Response — a Black man on the ground with his hands tied behind his back. Nothing could possibly justify these being the only two photos illustrating the need for 10 more officers. Others have cited how incongruent this is to our Mendocino population as Blacks are less than one percent of our population. Some could say we have more out of county "workers" here because of large corporate illegal grows. The current unprecedented numbers of cell phone camera recordings of travesties of civil/human rights on Blacks by police officers in the past few years along with many of us witnessing and never forgetting the murder of George Floyd has many of us asking hard questions; we are opening our eyes and learning the documented history of our White framings of "imminent threats and appropriate response" for the last four hundreds years and those two photos are, unfortunately, a classic example. May we all learn from these difficult moments. May this learning foster compassion and resolve to seek second chances for us all.

Sincerely,
Kate Dougherty