

Dear Supervisors,

I am writing to express my concern as a taxpayer and resident in District 5. It is unacceptable to continue to allow the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office to spend without any limitations, checks or balances, with expectation that public funds will always make up for any overages. This has repeatedly resulted in an unbalanced budget, which is deeply irresponsible. It is your obligation as the Board of Supervisors to balance the budget, and to work with departments to ensure that the budgets they present and that you approve are realistic and set limits when they are not. I would encourage you all to think about how the voter demographics in Mendocino County are changing, and how your lack of ability to provide responsible budget oversight could impact your ability to be elected in the future. There are many constituents across districts who have been disappointed by your response and ability to manage this issue effectively.

The MCSO has been asked repeatedly to provide data regarding his spending practices and stated needs, and has failed repeatedly. Sheriff Kendall has been unable to speak coherently in public meetings using actual data and evidence to support his budget needs, and has resorted to sensationalized folksy anecdotes, sports analogies and at times what could be perceived as disrespectful conduct in public meetings to make his case. Would the Board of Supervisors allow any other department head to do this and continue to allow them unbridled access to public funds? There was no substantive documented follow up to or changes made from the last audit of the sheriff's office mentioned in the most recent CEO's report. There was no clear statement of the amounts identified or cost savings that resulted from the 2019-20 "comprehensive inventory" of contractual services. While there may be no hope for a balanced budget this year, I would highly recommend requesting a time study across all positions funded through MCSO, as MCSO seems to struggle with organizing and deploying its human resources in a manner that does not result in significant overtime spending. A time study could even be built into a future third party audit.

Regarding Agenda Item 8c, this conflict is a spectacular waste of taxpayer dollars. Regardless, I support the BOS in asking that any attorney hired by Sheriff Kendall not have a current conflict with the County. I have no recommendations other than that I hope the BOS understands its role in stewarding public funds, and that a long-term lack of oversight is what brought us to this place. As someone who advocated in support of an independent audit, I would also like to point out that this legal battle is already shaping up to cost more than what an audit would have.

It is clear that this issue is just one piece of a much larger one regarding spending oversight and program efficacy/how that translates into actual outcomes and impact in our County. As more of these issues are uncovered, I hope the rest of the Board of Supervisors can follow the example of Sup. Williams in setting and holding higher expectations for transparency and effective management of our public funds and programs.

Sincerely,
Miquette Thompson