

MINUTES



County of Inyo Board of Supervisors

January 19, 2022

The Board of Supervisors of the County of Inyo, State of California, met in special session at the hour of 1:01 p.m., on January 19, 2022 in the Board of Supervisors Room, County Administrative Center, Independence, with the following Supervisors present via webinar per California Assembly Bill 361: Chairperson Dan Tothoroh, presiding, Jeff Griffiths, Rick Pucci, Matt Kingsley, and Jennifer Roeser. Also present: County Administrator Leslie Chapman, Assistant Clerk of the Board Darcy Ellis, and County Counsel John-Carl Vallejo.

Pledge of Allegiance Supervisor Kingsley led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment Chairperson Tothoroh asked for public comment on items not calendared on the agenda.

The Assistant Clerk of the Board had not received additional written comment and nobody requested to speak to the Board via the “hand-raising” feature on Zoom.

*Personnel – Sheriff
Candidate
Interviews and
Appointment*

Assistant County Administrator Sue Dishion announced that one of the four candidates for Sheriff had withdrawn their request for appointment, so the Board would only be interviewing three individuals today: Acting Sheriff Eric Pritchard, Chief District Attorney Investigator Stephanie Rennie, and Sheriff Investigator Kelvin Johnston. It was explained that whoever is appointed today will serve out the remainder of retired Sheriff Hollowell’s term, with the winner of the 2022 election taking office for a new four-year term in January 2023. Board members inquired whether an appointment was required, given that the primary election for the Office of Sheriff is happening in June. County Counsel John-Carl Vallejo explained that Government Code states the Board “shall” fill the vacancy, and the Attorney General has opined that not doing so is shirking responsibility.

During the course of the interviews, each candidate was given 5 minutes to make an opening statement in which they described the duties of the Office of Sheriff and why they think they are qualified. This introduction was followed by each member of the Board asking the candidates the following questions:

1. Supervisor Griffiths: “What actions do you think can be taken to build better communication and trust between the Sheriff’s office and the community?”
2. Supervisor Tothoroh: “What is your position on de-escalation training being made mandatory for deputies?”
3. Supervisor Roeser: “The one topic that comes up the most with residents is Law Enforcement coverage and capacity. In comparison to other Law Enforcement Agencies there is an appearance that the Inyo County Sheriff’s Department is heavy on Supervisor level staff compared to Deputies. Would you agree with this, (if not, explain) and if so, how would you schedule or structure the Sheriff’s Department differently?”
4. Supervisor Kingsley: “The number one constituent complaint for me is the speed of traffic on HWY 395 through our small towns. What roles do you think Inyo County Sheriff’s Department could play in helping to address the issue?”
5. Supervisor Pucci: “Communication is extremely important. Tell us how you plan on communicating with the Board of Supervisors regarding important issues that take place in the Department.”
- 6.

Supervisors were given the opportunity to ask follow-up questions, and the candidates were afforded the chance to make closing statements. The Board began its deliberations at 2:39 p.m. Board members discussed being in an uncomfortable situation so close to the election, but noted they were pleased to have three quality candidates apply and to know that they are

all planning to run for the Office of Sheriff in the election. Public comment was heard from someone calling themselves "Good Citizen," who commented on an individual not in today's interviews who is running for Sheriff; and from Sam Rottner, who said she is familiar with each of the three candidates and believes they are all qualified. Board members agreed.

The Chairperson at one point polled the Board members as to their leading applicants:

- Supervisor Griffiths: Acting Sheriff Pritchard
- Supervisor Pucci: Acting Sheriff Pritchard
- Chairperson Tothoroh: Investigator Rennie
- Supervisor Roeser: Investigator Rennie
- Supervisor Kingsley: Acting Sheriff Pritchard

Moved by Supervisor Roeser and seconded by Supervisor Pucci to appoint Acting Sheriff Eric Pritchard to the Office of Sheriff, to serve out the remainder of the current, vacant term. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

Chairperson Tothoroh adjourned the meeting at 3:16 p.m., to 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, January 25, 2022 in the County Administrative Center in Independence.

Chairperson, Inyo County Board of Supervisors

*Attest: LESLIE L. CHAPMAN
Clerk of the Board*

by: _____
Darcy Ellis, Assistant