



DATE: April 4, 2024

TO: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Members of the Community Advisory Council (CAC)

FROM: Lorena Barrera, CAC Chair
Nancy Pemberton, CAC Vice-Chair
John Alden, IOLERO Director

RE: Work Plan from CAC 2024 Strategic Planning Workshop

The Community Advisory Council (CAC) held a Strategic Planning Workshop on Saturday, February 24, 2024, to review the CAC's work in 2023, and to discuss what work the CAC might address in the coming year. This memo memorializes for the CAC and the Board of Supervisors the priorities the CAC identified at the Workshop, the committees the CAC chose to keep from 2023 and the membership of those committees and the expected schedules for those committees' work. Together, these comprise the Work Plan for the CAC for the upcoming year.

A. PRIORITY POLICY ISSUES

Following are the priority issues the CAC adopted in 2023 and the status of the work on those issues:

1. Traffic Stops / RIPA Report Follow-Up

Members: Darnell Bowen, Chair; Lorena Barrera; Nathan Solomon

Racial disparities in traffic stops have been an issue of much discussion nationwide, and for some time. Recently the State of California has begun requiring individual law enforcement agencies to record the perceived race of stopped drivers, among other characteristics. Many agencies in Sonoma County just began to record such data in mid-2021. The state board responsible for gathering and reporting this data to the public is called "RIPA." The RIPA annual reports summarizing and analyzing this data are far too complicated to recount accurately here. But in short, they do indicate that traffic stops of BIPOC drivers happen at a higher rate than BIPOC residents in California as a whole.

The 2023 RIPA Report showing Sonoma County's data for the second half of 2021 is now available here: <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/ripa-board-report-2023.pdf> At page 34, one

can find the total number of reported traffic stops for the SCSO and the contract agencies of Sonoma PD and Windsor PD. In total, these are just over 3,000 reported stops. More data for 2022 is expected shortly.

The Ad Hoc Committee began its work in 2023 by asking the Sheriff's Department to answer questions regarding the collection of data and how the data is submitted to DOJ. Committee members undertook an analysis of the data from the DOJ website described above and, after discussion patterns that emerged from the analysis of the data, they submitted additional questions in an effort to get an understanding of the accuracy of the data and how corrections to the data are made, when necessary.

The Ad Hoc Committee would like to continue its work in 2024 which will include gathering additional information from the SCSO RIPA Administrator, learning from the Santa Rosa RIPA Administrator how SRPD currently gathers and reports the required data and how it corrects that data, when necessary. The Committee intends to research RIPA programs in other jurisdictions outside the county for comparative purposes, including using a data validator or auditor, to ensure accurate reporting to DOJ.

The Ad Hoc Committee's goals are, in cooperation with SCSO, to offer solutions to the data submission problems currently facing the Sheriff's Department and, most importantly, address the issues the data raises regarding racial profiling in stops. The Committee plans to offer opportunities for public participation through webinars and public participation in the Committee's work.

The current estimate for completion is six months.

2. Recruitment, Hiring & Retention Best Practices / Law Enforcement Culture

Members: Nathan Solomon, Chair; Esther Lemus, Nancy Pemberton, Jim Duffy (public member)

Recruiting new hires has been a substantial challenge for law enforcement throughout the state and nation in the last few years. The SCSO has been assertive in the last few years in recruiting new members, and continues to need more recruits to maintain staffing. See, for example, the SCSO recruiting page: <https://sonomasheriffjobs.wordpress.com/>

Diversification of the law enforcement workforce has also been a priority nationwide. Sheriff Engram has stated his commitment to diversifying the SCSO workforce, as well, both by race and gender. Some studies suggest diversification of law enforcement agencies may lead to increased community trust. See, for example, the US Department of Justice / Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement initiative: <https://www.eeoc.gov/advancing-diversity-law-enforcement>

The Ad Hoc Committee spent last year educating itself on hiring, recruitment, and retention issues through a presentation from Sonoma County's HR Department; research into policy recommendations by other entities; and submitted a list of questions to the Sheriff's Department regarding its policies and practices. To date, the Sheriff's Personnel Administrator has been unable to meet with the Committee or to answer the Committee's questions.

At the Workshop, Sheriff Engram described the Department's success in reducing the number of vacancies in the Department, temporarily re-assigning patrol deputies to correctional officer duties to reduce the amount of mandatory overtime for correctional officers, and adopting mental and physical health programs to help reduce stress and injuries.

The Committee would like to continue its work and decided to focus on two areas: the degree to which the Sheriff's Department has diversified its staff and the extent to which discretionary decision-making reduces the diversification of the applicant pool; and the degree to which recruitment efforts underscore militarized policing rather than community policing. If necessary, the Committee will, in cooperation with SCSO, recommend policies, procedures, and practices that would achieve the goals of a diversified workforce and reduce the militarization of the Department.

Given the difficulty in obtaining data from the Sheriff's Department, the Ad Hoc Committee is unable to set a timetable for completing its work.

3. Evictions and Unlawful Detainers

Members: Esther Lemus Chair; George Valenzuela; Patrick McDonnell (public member)

Sheriffs' offices are the only law enforcement agencies specifically charged with handling evictions. Generally speaking, whether a person is evicted is a decision made by courts, not sheriffs. But local sheriffs do have some control over how they communicate with tenants, and how the evictions are carried out. See, for example, some examples from other communities:

<https://www.sfsheriff.com/services/civil-processes/evictions/get-help-if-youre-being-evicted><https://dcba.lacounty.gov/portfolio/eviction/>

The CAC created an ad hoc committee to address eviction issues in late 2023. The Ad Hoc Committee has been educating its members with the helpful expertise of members of the public. The Committee plans to gather information on local eviction practices when the Sheriff is involved and create recommendations for improving local practices. The Committee would like to address the question of additional training for deputies who carry out evictions on the issue of criminal trespass by landlords.

The Committee expects to complete its work in the second quarter of 2024.

4. Use of Canine Policy

Members: David Jones, Chair; Robin Jurs; Alan Pravel (public member); Carl Tennenbaum (public member)

The CAC had in 2021 adopted and submitted to the Sheriff's Department recommendations on use of canines. The Sheriff's Department did not respond to, or adopt, those recommendations. IOLERO's 2022-2023 annual report addressed three use of force cases involving canines and, in each case, IOLERO found that, contrary to the Sheriff's findings, each case involved violations of existing policy. Consequently, the CAC decided to take a fresh look at policies on the use of canines by the Sheriff's Department with a focus on adherence to 2021 legislation (Gov't. Code Sec 7286).

The committee has reviewed records on SCSO's recent canine uses of force, obtained records related to claims of injury arising out of those uses of canines, and researched studies regarding use of canines as well as policies from other California law enforcement agencies.

SCSO recently updated its canine policies and the Committee is reviewing those changes. The Committee intends to meet with SCSO representatives to discuss possible additional changes to the canine policy.

The Committee expects its work will be completed by December 2024.

5. Community Engagement

Members: Nancy Pemberton, Chair; Robin Jurs; Trevor Ward; Susan Lamont (public member)

The CAC created a standing Community Engagement Committee at its 2023 retreat. The Committee met three times during 2023.

During the Workshop, members of CAC and the public suggested the following efforts be undertaken to improve CAC's and IOLERO's community engagement.

- a. Expanding IOLERO's list of community organization contacts for sending newsletters and emails.
- b. Conduct workshops that allow increased public participation, perhaps quarterly.
- c. Create a FAQ page on the website to answer basic questions about IOLERO and CAC, including how IOLERO is funded.
- d. Use Instagram
- e. Conduct presentations aimed at high school seniors.
- f. Conduct presentations at Sonoma County Library

- g. Develop relationships with other organizations such as Los Cien, Latinos Unidos, NAMI Sonoma County
- h. Cultivate relationships with media outlets
- i. Host recorded webinars on issues of concern to CAC and the public, and post the recordings on our website.

This work is on-going.

The following issues were considered by the CAC at its 2023 Retreat but not pursued during 2023.

1. Mental Health

Provision of mental health treatment by first responders is evolving throughout the state.

The County of Sonoma and several cities within the County have already created systems to respond to calls for service for those experiencing mental health crises, rather than simply sending law enforcement to handle these issues themselves. In early 2023, the County was still considering how this model would work with law enforcement; for example, the County was still considering whether a Deputy Sheriff or a mental health practitioner would be the first to arrive at such a call. Since the CAC adopted this issue as a priority, the State has mandated a detailed first responder system for counties to implement, and Sonoma County has begun to create the program. The CAC was briefed on this new program in late 2023. This new state-mandated program resolved the debates within Sonoma County in 2023.

After that first response, continued treatment can be hard to secure. People needing treatment can then receive mental health services from local hospitals, but such resources in Sonoma County are reportedly strained to keep up with demand. Both funding for such services, and finding practitioners to provide such services, are challenges in Sonoma County and throughout the state. As a result, many of the detainees in the jail are suffering from mental health challenges, making the jail the largest single *de facto* mental health treatment facility in Sonoma County.

Due to these new measures, the CAC decided to table this priority in 2024.

2. De-Escalation

The CAC previously provided suggested policies with respect to de-escalation of force available at: <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/administrative-support-and-fiscal-services/independent-office-of-law-enforcement-review-and-outreach> The SCSO subsequently enacted a de-escalation policy, as required by state law (available on SCSO website).

But since then, the CAC and SCSO do not appear to have followed-up with each other on the issue of de-escalation. Given the centrality of de-escalation to modern use of force, the CAC will continue the conversation with the SCSO on this topic by inquiring as to the differences between the recommended and adopted policies, examining current training at the SCSO on de-escalation, and assessing whether any data shows how well de-escalation policy and training have improved outcomes in the field for both the public and SCSO personnel.

For now, the CAC is focusing on de-escalation in canine policy, as noted above. The CAC may return to this issue more broadly in the future.

B. POSSIBLE ISSUES FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

Members of the public suggested several areas for CAC's future consideration:

1. SCSO's relationship with ICE in reporting persons eligible for deportation.
 - a. On this issue, the CAC intends to hold a webinar or town hall to inform the CAC and the public as to the current state of the law and SCSO practices.
2. Jail conditions including telephone access, mental health treatment, and its surveillance system, including surveillance of psychological evaluations.
3. Reducing tension between deputies and members of the public during initial engagement.
4. How the SCSO addresses situations in which deputies are arrested for, or accused of, committing domestic violence offenses.

We did not have time at the 2024 Strategic Planning Workshop to discuss re-structuring our meetings. That issue will be addressed at an upcoming monthly meeting.

