



**Candidate Questionnaire for  
Sheriff of the City & County of San Francisco  
General Election, November 3, 2015**

Please return this questionnaire electronically to [contact\\_us@phdemclub.org](mailto:contact_us@phdemclub.org) **no later than Thursday, July 30<sup>th</sup>**. Candidates who do not return the questionnaire by the due date will not be invited to participate in the August 4th debate. Questionnaires will be made available to our members online.

Candidate name: **Vicki Hennessy**  
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Please write a brief response ( $\leq 200$  words) to each question.

1. Please describe your qualifications for this office.

**I have dedicated over 30 years of my career to San Francisco's Sheriff department and worked in nearly every rank in the department. These years of experience have given me a deep understanding of the nuts and bolts of the department. While in the department I worked as a Deputy Sheriff and as a member of the management team. In each of these roles I earned the respect and trust of my colleagues and a reputation as someone who can effectively lead the department.**

**While in the department, I led a number of programs and initiatives. In 2001 I developed the citywide plan that resulted in the San Francisco Sheriff's deputies securely collecting voted ballots from over 500 precincts. This plan is still in use today. I also led the Department of Emergency Management in 2008 when I was appointed Executive Director by then Mayor Gavin Newsom. In 2012, Mayor Ed Lee asked me to come out of retirement to serve as Interim Sheriff of the department. I believe that my years of service to the department and my earned leadership roles have provided me with the necessary experience to effectively lead the San Francisco Sheriff's department.**

2. What are the top three issues facing the Sheriff's department, and what will you do about those issues?

**The Sheriff is an officer of the court whose priority is to keep people safe both in and out of jail. Leadership demands balance between criminal and social justice and effective and frequent communication regarding expectations is essential. Working with Command Staff to take ownership of their areas for responsibility would be key.**

**I would increase true accountability and transparency in the department. Body cameras with carefully developed procedures that include community input are one tool. Others include: a community stakeholder group to assist with defining transparency; a prisoner ombudsman program that interacts with the inmates regularly to assess the delivery of services; redesigning the website, to include policies and other meaningful information, including dispositions of complaints received.**

**The Sheriff's Department has a rich history of providing in-jail, post-jail and alternative to jail programs. I believe Five Keys charter School has the capacity to train not just inmates in implicit bias recognition, but all our staff as a pilot program. I would like to include Five Keys with other city entities in the development of a training innovation hub that delivers 21st century training for local law enforcement and others in our criminal and social justice community.**

3. Do you support the building of a new jail? Why or why not?

**I believe that it is the obligation of the Sheriff to support jails that are safe, modern and provide the best housing for the people that come into custody. This one jail will be much smaller than the outdated, seismically unsafe and dangerous jails it is replacing, both of which I commanded as a captain. The dormitory style jail is not appropriate for the type of prisoners we currently keep in custody. A 21st century jail will provide additional space for much needed mental health and substance abuse treatment facilities, programming, visiting and recreation. There is no doubt, however, that mental health treatment facilities, low income housing availability and other social programs are also needed, however the capital improvement funding set aside for the jail will not necessarily be used for anything but another capital improvement project. I believe that the crisis in mental health is another priority for the department and I would collaborate with advocates to promote a change in our current mental health system, to afford safe and effective non-jail alternatives.**

4. Should the training and discipline of Sheriff's deputies be changed? If so, how?

**Training and discipline go hand and hand. A recruit deputy selection process that measures areas such as social competency, impulse control, emotional regulation and stress tolerance is something for which I would advocate.**

**Effectively training deputies to meet new expectations regarding implicit bias, crisis intervention training including de-escalation techniques, culturally competent gender identity policies and training, the disease of addiction, trends in mental health treatment takes place on two fronts. It is important to set the expectations through providing these trainings to existing officers and command staff, using community resources when**

**available. It is also important to lobby the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training to incorporate these modules into the basic course for recruits and take a look at the “bootcamp” style training that prevails.**

**Discipline occurs when there is sustained evidence that a deputy violated a policy or regulation. The degree of the response, dependent on the circumstances, can be counseling, retraining, a letter of reprimand, suspension, or termination. Except for instances of termination, retraining combined with the other outcomes is something that I generally support. Providing independent investigative oversight and providing regular reports to the public regarding the disciplinary process is something I would establish.**

Thank you for your time and your commitment to public service. We look forward to seeing you at the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House on August 4<sup>th</sup>.

*Executive Committee, Potrero Hill Democratic Club*