



**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 **no later than Thursday, July 30th**. 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: Ross Mirkarimi

Contact person:

Email address: RMIRK@MSN.COM

Phone number: 415-412-7526

Web site: www.rossmysheriff.com

Please write a brief response (≤ 200 words) to each question.

1. Please describe your qualifications for this office.

Like Sheriff Mike Hennessey who served for 32 years as San Francisco's longest serving sheriff, I am an outsider just like him and Sheriff Richard Hongisto. In 2011 I was honored to have been chosen by Mike Hennessey to carry on his legacy, and honored again to have his support for my reelection as Sheriff.

Despite any challenge that has come my way, I haven't shied away from pressing forward with the reforms that make the SF Sheriff's Department a national leader in criminal justice system. As the District 5 Supervisor who authored a series of laws preparing San Francisco for State Prisoner Realignment (AB 109), we've defied every negative forecast of jail overcrowding to a resurgence of violent crime, thus making our city one of the most under-crowded county jail system in the United States, with significant reductions in recidivism rates – this has earned us many awards over the last several years, most recently by Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, where they have nominated our department -- the only law enforcement agency in the nation out of hundreds considered – to be a finalist in government innovation.

Unlike my predecessor I am a sworn peace officer. Graduated from the SFPD Academy, class president, as well as worked for the SF District Attorney for nine years, before successfully running for District 5 Supervisor in 2004. In my nearly two terms as Supervisor I legislated many laws designed to improve community policing and law

enforcement accountability. I have carried these ideals with me into the Sheriff's office even to the chagrin of law enforcement unions, who didn't support Mike Hennessey nor me.

I understand paramilitary institutions on more than just the local level. I'm told that I remain the only elected office holder in San Francisco that is a Military Veteran. I understand the importance of resisting erosion, even a little, to the constitutional independence of the SF Sheriff's Department. I can see how our department, even when wooed by the SFPD or Mayor, could be subjugated to just becoming a department of "jailers".

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

- **Stop Criminalizing the Mentally Ill:** Because of the severe reduction in hospital psych beds, San Francisco jails have become the largest mental health provider. As Sheriff I reject the direction where our city is going by ignoring a growing mental health crisis that is well exhibited on our streets, thereby using our jails as a default weigh station due to the absence of psychiatric-substance abuse treatment centers. I'll continue to press City Hall toward major reform at how San Francisco replies to its mentally ill and the carousel between our jails, SF General Hospital and the streets. As I express below, also using funds slated for a new jail be redirected toward better facilities for our growing complex psych population.
- **Evictions:** By the time a court order, writ for eviction, comes to the Sheriff's Department we then become the agency of last resort. I have been strongly advocating for three years the funding of our Eviction Assistance Unit (EAU). We are the only sheriff's department in California that has invented an EAU to assist vulnerable populations (elderly, families with children, the serious ill, facing eviction and homelessness, get assistance from us to rebound into housing. The Mayor has opposed this approach and my funding requests. Considering the ramifications to public safety when adding to the homeless or destitute rolls, we have an obligation to not compound the problem when an eviction is executed. In 2014, there were over 2,000 evictions and we intervened - with existing resources - to assist nearly 500 people - all without violating a court order. Just think what we can do if we have a properly funded EAU to officially help people stay off the streets and out of harms' way.
- **Children of Incarcerated Parents:** Nearly 40 percent of our incarcerated are mothers and fathers. Statistics show that children of incarcerated parents have a higher risk level of violating the law in their life thus resulting in a public safety complexity not well understood in this nation's criminal justice system. I truly believe that if prisons and jail systems focused on developing a more constructive role toward facilitating contact and connection between a child and their incarcerated loved one, rather than furthering the common tension-based relationship that breeds resentment or hate because of how dissatisfying the experience is when the child visits, then we're doing the double duty of making an unpleasant reality be less unpleasant and perhaps, public safety enhanced.

• My administration has moved San Francisco from the bottom of the list for visiting hours per week to the top of the list among the nine Bay Area county jail systems.

Our expansion parent-child contact visits is unprecedented. Our dismantling of hurdles like the price gouging of unregulated phone calls has made the SF Sheriff's Dept a national leader for progressive reform.

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

Not support – and for this to work, the commitment must be made by City Hall to significantly increase its funding for pretrial diversion and alternatives to incarceration such as Electronic Monitoring. In 2013 I ordered the closure of County Jail 3 (6th floor of Hall of Justice) due to deplorable conditions and declining population...Against the wishes of many in our deputy staff, it was the first time a jail had closed since its 54 year existence. If practical, I'd ordered the closure of County Jail 4 (7th floor, HoJ) today but the problem is we don't have an alternate space for the 200 plus inmates and staff deserving more humane and rehabilitative-effective conditions. Obviating the need for a replacement jail means that we lower the jail population without risk to public safety by enacting a plan that has yet to adequately attend to the growing mentally ill population – a better return on the cost of a conventional jail would be an alternative public health/ public safety center that attends to our mental health population, substance abuse treatment, with expanded pretrial diversion. Concurrently, this plan will also lower the disproportionate incarceration of Black and Brown people.

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

Yes – to modernize. 1) It is unconscionable that City Hall does not require Crisis Intervention Training (24 hours certified) for our deputies and staff that encounter the mentally ill, many whom are inmates or formerly incarcerated. Mayor Lee has denied funding for CIS training for the Sheriff's but he has approved it for the SFPD. Since the jails have become the largest mental health bed provider in the city, then we are gambling on an inevitable problem. 2) To establish a certified California Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Field Training Officer (FTO) program – never has happened in the SFSD. Similar field training for SFPD should be applied for SF Sheriff's – with a declining jail population and efforts to expand SFSD for assisting SF Police services outside of SF General Hospital, prospective Station Transfer Units for all SFPD Stations, then it's counter intuitive to not cross pollinate field training. 3) True rotation system of deputies of all assignments. 4) SFSD Internal Affairs and Criminal Investigative Unit: examine not just violator but their supervisors and management that enable the violation to occur. This is not about tone. It's about pathology and practice.

Regarding discipline – establishing an early warning system for deputies that doesn't reset the clock when a new offense especially a significant offense occurs. In keeping with their union labor rights and City HR rules, I've been pushing for a coming together of all stakeholders to revisit weak rules that enable retention of deputies after progressive discipline effectuated.

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 4th.

Executive Committee, Potrero Hill Democratic Club