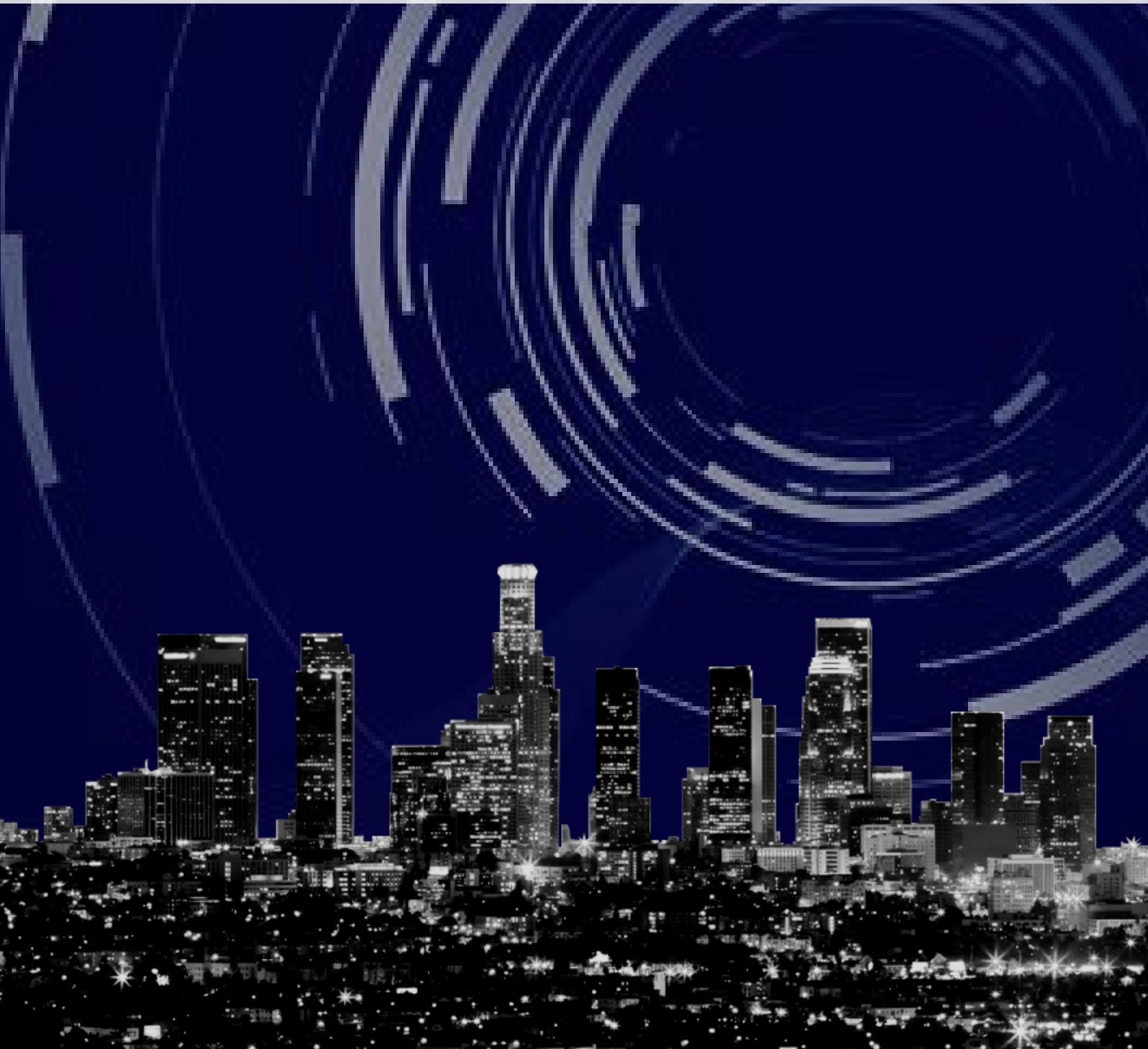




LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT 2017



MESSAGE FROM THE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



BRIAN K. WILLIAMS

**“THE ARC OF THE
MORAL UNIVERSE
IS LONG, BUT IT
BENDS TOWARD
JUSTICE.”**

Martin Luther King

At a recent town hall meeting, a member of the community stated that we must build “trust through reform.” To me, this statement truly encapsulated the task in front of us; to build a bridge of trust between the Sheriff’s department and the community. I know that this is no easy task. The Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD) has been in existence for over 150 years and this marks the first time in their history that an oversight body has been established. As such, there are no quick fixes. It is only through the steady drumbeat of transparent, honest, respectful and open dialogue, coupled with a true call to action, that we will realize the words of that concerned citizen, “building trust through reform.”

I am proud of the work that the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission (COC) has done thus far and am humbled by the trust that the Board of Supervisors (Board), the Sheriff and the community has placed in the COC. I would be remiss if I did not give special recognition to the staff for their tireless efforts to advance the cause of the COC. Kudos and thanks to Christine Aque, Maryhelen Cohen, Oi Ping “Jamie” Chung, Daniel Delgadillo and Tracy Jordan Johnson.

On our one year anniversary, it is patently obvious that we cannot rest upon our laurels. There is much to be done and we are committed to continue building.

“Civilian oversight is a key component of fair, compassionate and effective 21st century community policing.”

“Civilian oversight will ensure that the public is given a voice, holding people in power accountable.”

***Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
First District***

“Over the first year of its existence, the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission has established a good working and trust-based relationship with the Sheriff’s Department, the Office of Inspector General, the Board of Supervisors, and most importantly, with communities throughout the County who need to have confidence that law enforcement is transparent and accountable.

This is a process that takes time and care and I am happy to see how successfully the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission has built a solid foundation with all stakeholders.”

***Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Third District***



“THERE HAS TO BE MORE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PUBLIC AND CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT IS A VEHICLE TO FACILITATE THE MECHANISMS OF REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT TO ENSURE CREDIBILITY, AS WE RE-ESTABLISH PUBLIC TRUST.”

***Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Chairman
Second District***

“The residents of the County have firm and fair advocates in the commissioners who volunteered their time and their attention to the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission. We thank the Commissioners for their dedication, insightful questions, and various viewpoints. We applaud their devotion to fairness, transparency, and public safety and look forward to continuing this partnership.”

***Supervisor Janice Hahn
Fourth District***

“The Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission provides an important opportunity for the Board, the Community and the Sheriff’s Department to work collaboratively to address issues, provide transparency and build trust. When we bring people together to professionally navigate challenges, and thoughtfully struggle with solutions we will succeed in our shared values,”

***Supervisor Kathryn Barger
Fifth District***

ESTABLISHMENT OF COC

On September 27, 2016, the Board approved an ordinance creating the COC. The COC is authorized by Chapter 3.79 of the Los Angeles County Code.

The role of the COC is to provide civilian oversight of the LASD, review its policies and procedures, make recommendations and to act as a liaison between the LASD and the public. The COC serves in an advisory capacity to the Board and the Sheriff. The COC also gives the public a dedicated forum, promotes transparency and accountability within the LASD and builds partnerships with the Sheriff, LASD, the OIG and the Board.



APPOINTMENT OF COMMISSIONERS

The Board appointed nine Commissioners to serve on the COC. Five members are appointed by the Board, one nominated from each Supervisorial District. Four additional members are also appointed by the Board. The Commissioners' diverse backgrounds include community and faith leaders, a retired Lieutenant from the LASD, a former federal judge, and attorneys with a broad range of experiences—from former prosecutors and public defenders to professors and executives from legal non-profit organizations.

MESSAGE FROM CHAIR ROBERT C. BONNER



In existence for only a year, the COC is still in its infancy. Yet the COC holds great promise as an independent body for promoting and facilitating important reforms within the LASD—lasting reforms of the kind that will foster greater trust between the LASD and the community it serves. At one of our early town halls, a member of the public captured the essence of our mission when he remarked that the COC is about “building trust through reform.”

One of the seeds for the COC was the Citizens’ Commission on Jail Violence (CCJV), established by the Board of Supervisors to examine the use of excessive and unnecessary force within the Los Angeles County jail system. The report and recommendations of the CCJV, which led to a dramatic reduction in the use of inappropriate force within the jail, are a useful model for the COC as it moves forward. The concept of an independent civilian oversight commission for the LASD was strongly supported by community organizations and members of the Board. Our reform-minded current Sheriff also unequivocally supported the creation of the COC. Without their support, and the efforts of countless others, there would be no COC.

Although the COC is still determining its priorities and how to be optimally effective, it is clear that all members of the Commission are committed to thoughtfully studying the issues and developing serious and implementable reform recommendations. Be it mental health issues faced by deputies on patrol, the use of an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) or drones, body worn cameras, or inappropriate use of force by deputies on patrol, I am gratified that all Commissioners, working with our staff, are engaged and dedicated to making the COC a success. The COC benefits greatly from the diverse backgrounds and experiences that the Commissioners bring to our task.

Though we may not always agree on the precise ways to achieve reform, all of us have the common goal of objectively identifying the areas within the Sheriff’s Department that need reform. And we share the goal of making the LASD the model for the nation regarding what modern policing can and should be.

In due course, through the work of our ad hoc committees and staff, I anticipate that the COC will develop and adopt soundly written reports that support our recommendations for reform. Already, the COC has adopted significant resolutions and established itself as an important forum to gather and receive public input. We are committed to expanding our outreach to even broader segments of the community through town halls and other media.

This report describes the initial efforts of the COC to organize itself and identify issues for needed reforms. While much work remains to be done, I believe that the COC is off to a good start, and working with the community, the Sheriff and the Board, we can and will achieve important and meaningful reform that benefits both the LASD and the public it is sworn to protect.

I want to give special thanks to the COC staff and its Executive Director as well as the Office of Inspector General (OIG), the LASD and the Board for their input and interaction with our Commission. I also want to express appreciation for the tireless efforts of the men and women of the LASD to keep our community safe.

It is a privilege to serve on the COC. I am honored to be its first Chair.

COC COMMISSIONERS



Chair Robert C. Bonner
Attorney and former U.S. Attorney
and U.S. District Judge
Appointed by former Supervisor
Michael D. Antonovich, Fifth District



Commissioner Patti Giggans
Executive Director
Peace Over Violence
Appointed by
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, Third District



Commissioner James P. Harris
Former LASD Lieutenant
Appointed by former
Supervisor Don Knabe,
Fifth District



Commissioner Sean Kennedy
Executive Director of Center of Juvenile
Law and Policy at Loyola Law School
Appointed by the Board of Supervisors



Commissioner Heather Miller
Rabbi, Beth Chayim Chadashim
Appointed by the Board of Supervisors



Commissioner Priscilla Ocen
Loyola Law School
Associate Professor
Appointed by the Board of Supervisors



Commissioner Lael Rubin
Former Los Angeles County
Deputy District Attorney
Appointed by the Board of
Supervisors



Vice-Chair Xavier Thompson
President of Baptist Ministers'
Conference and Senior Pastor of
Southern Saint Paul Baptist Church
Appointed by
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas,
Second District



Commissioner Hernán Vera
Attorney and former president and
CEO of Public Counsel
Appointed by
Supervisor Hilda Solis, First District



COC MISSION

The goal of the COC is to provide oversight of and promote transparency and accountability within the LASD. The COC provides independent analysis of LASD policies, practices and procedures and makes recommendations, where warranted, for reform. The COC also advises the Board, the Sheriff, and the public. The COC strives to perform its duties in an independent, thoughtful, impartial, and transparent manner that promotes credibility, and enhances trust and respect. The thoughts and views of the community are paramount in this effort and thus the COC welcomes community involvement and provides opportunities for robust community engagement.

COC OUTREACH

Commission Meetings:

The COC conducts its regular monthly meeting on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Metropolitan Water District (MWD), which is located adjacent to Union Station, the hub of Los Angeles' public transportation system. The COC advertises its meetings at the Hall of Administration, via its website, press releases, utilizing an email database, as well as other forms of social media. We would like to thank the kind staff of the MWD as well as Patriotic Hall for their assistance in providing meeting locations for the COC.

Town Halls Meetings:

In an effort to effectively reach out to communities across Los Angeles County, the COC coordinates with the Board, community groups and other interested parties to organize town halls across our region. Thus far, town halls have been held in Lancaster, Lakewood, the Mid-Wilshire area, South Los Angeles and Cudahy. In the upcoming year, the COC expects to conduct at least five town hall meetings.

Complaint Process with the OIG:

The COC receives a variety of complaints via e-mail, phone, in person, mail correspondence, and at the monthly meetings and town halls. As the COC has no investigative capacity, the COC staff forwards the complaints to OIG for investigation and follows up with the OIG to insure that the complaints have been addressed.



SUBJECT MATTERS UNDER REVIEW OR ACTED UPON

During the past year, the COC has identified and begun studying several subject areas relevant to the LASD's policies, procedures and practices. These subject areas include mental health training of deputies assigned to patrol, inappropriate use of force in patrol, the use of body worn cameras, and the complaint process of the LASD. In addition, the Board has requested the COC to evaluate certain other issues affecting the LASD, including Mental Evaluation Teams (MET), the use of an UAS by the LASD, compliance by the LASD with the Sheriff's policy regarding LASD's relationship with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and testing for Driving under the influence (DUI) of cannabis. For some of these issues--for example UAS, MET, Use of Force and Body Cameras, and the Sheriff's Immigration Policy--the COC has created ad hoc committees of three to four Commissioners to work with staff to analyze the issues, report back to the full Commission and, if appropriate, propose recommendations to the COC to forward to the Sheriff and the Board.

In addition to the above, the COC staff is currently analyzing and researching a myriad of subject areas concerning the LASD's policies, procedures and practices. Some of these studies are being done in conjunction with other County Departments, the OIG and the LASD. At the request of the Commission, staff is currently preparing a priority list of subjects to review for consideration by the Commission.

The following are some of the subjects acted upon or under review during the COC's first year of operation.

Subject Matters Under Review or Acted Upon

COC Resolutions:

Since its inception, the COC has adopted three resolutions.

Brady List:

On March 23, 2017, the COC approved a resolution to support the action of Sheriff Jim McDonnell in his efforts to provide to the District Attorney's Office a list of deputies who have been disciplined for misconduct which might affect their credibility as witnesses in criminal trials. The issue whether the Sheriff can legally provide the *Brady* list to the Los Angeles County District Attorney is pending before the California Supreme Court. In furtherance of this resolution, at its September 28, 2017 meeting, the COC approved the transmittal of an Amicus letter brief to the Supreme Court, again in support of the Sheriff's efforts to provide the *Brady* list to the District Attorney.

Use of Force Policy:

On August 24, 2017, the COC adopted a resolution that opposed the statements made by President Trump concerning treatment of arrested suspects and appeared to promote the unconstitutional use of force.



LASD Transparency:

On May 25, 2017, the COC passed a resolution recommending that the LASD disclose data regarding discipline, shootings and other uses of force, and citizen complaints on a publicly accessible website. In response to this recommendation, the LASD modified their public data sharing site to include reports on Category 3 force incidents, discipline, public complaints and commendations.

SUBJECT MATTERS UNDER REVIEW OR ACTED UPON

Unmanned Aircraft System:

On January 24, 2017, the Board requested the COC to evaluate the LASD UAS Program. After forming an ad hoc committee, the COC studied the LASD's policies regarding the usage of the UAS, witnessed operational use of the LASD's UAS, considered a report previously authored by the OIG, took extensive public comment, and examined available literature regarding law enforcement use of UASs within the United States. The ad hoc committee submitted its report and recommendations at the COC meeting on July 27, 2017. Two of the three members supported the recommendations, but one member did not. The motion to adopt the ad hoc committee's recommendations was four in favor and four opposed, and therefore, the motion did not carry.



The UAS Program was again considered at the COC's September 28, 2017 meeting. After evaluating the UAS Program and the protocols surrounding its limited authorized uses, and considering the significant public concerns, the COC voted 5-4 to request that the LASD permanently ground their UAS and end the UAS Program. While the Sheriff has indicated that the LASD will continue to utilize the UAS in a limited capacity, the Sheriff also indicated that he would adopt the guidelines recommended by the ad hoc committee.



Cannabis/DUI Testing:

On February 7, 2017, the Board requested the Sheriff and District Attorney, in consultation with the Public Defender, Alternate Public Defender and the COC to report on best practices used across the County for methods of identifying and evaluating when drivers are driving under the influence of cannabis. Currently, the COC is participating with the Office of Marijuana Management (Cannabis Law Enforcement Work Group) to identify best practices for methods of identifying and evaluating when drivers are driving under the influence of cannabis.

LASD Immigration Policy:

On January 10, 2017, the Board requested that the COC, in collaboration with the OIG, and the Auditor-Controller (AC), review, analyze and make recommendations concerning the LASD's adherence to certain immigration policies, including the Sheriff's policies as outlined in his letter dated January 10, 2017. The COC was also directed to review any other relevant policies as needed to carry out the intent of the policy and report back to the Board. Upon receiving this request from the Board, the COC established an ad hoc committee to evaluate compliance with LASD policies and State law.

This issue generated significant feedback from community members. Due to the complexity of this matter and the number of collaborating entities, this matter continues to be under review.



Use of Force:

One of the most vexing issues in law enforcement today---and one that has caused calls for civilian oversight---is the issue of inappropriate and unconstitutional use of force by police.

Acknowledging this, on its own initiative, the COC requested that staff begin a comprehensive study of use of force issues in patrol, the adequacy of policy, training and discipline. The issue of body worn cameras and related issues will also be studied. Analysis of this matter is ongoing and it is anticipated that the ad hoc committee will report to the COC and make such recommendations as are appropriate.

LOOKING FORWARD

The COC continually assesses the needs of the public, current issues in the community, trends within the LASD and requests from the Board in order to strategically plan the work of the COC. In the upcoming year, the COC will focus on completing the hiring of staff, establish priorities for staff and the COC, developing a strategic plan and most importantly working with the community, the Board, OIG and the LASD in a comprehensive effort to build trust between the public and the LASD and make the LASD all that it can and should be.

SHERIFF CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT COMMISSION

In closing, we are particularly fortunate to have the support of the Board, the Executive Office, multiple County departments and most importantly the community in our efforts to bring oversight to the LASD. A special thank you to Lori Glasgow, Celia Zavala, Hanna Cheru and Robert DeLaCruz for their assistance and guidance in helping us build a strong foundation for the COC. We understand the trust that each of you has put in us and we will always honor that trust. Trust through reform shall be our mantra.



SHERIFF CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT COMMISSION

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