

Prior personnel management experience and number of employees managed:

I served with the Park County Sheriff Department for eleven years in the capacity of frontline supervisor with rank of Master Sergeant. My primary responsibility was to manage the activities of frontline Patrol Deputies as these individuals performed all duties associated with responding to citizen requests for law enforcement service, routine patrol duties, traffic enforcement, initial on-scene investigation, and crime scene control and preservation. I had the additional responsibility of supervising Animal Control personnel and Reserve Deputies. I would normally be responsible for supervising up to thirty Department personnel.

The scope of my responsibility required that I be completely versed in all aspects of the patrol mission, while also having superior ability to manage Patrol personnel and the corresponding ability to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of subordinates so that they could be provided resources to assist them in becoming better able to provide the highest level of service to our citizens.

What do you feel are the minimum requirements to serve as a Park County Deputy?

The minimum requirements to serve as a Level 1 POST certified law enforcement officer are established in statute. While law enforcement agencies are legally required to comply with the minimum statutory standards, the individual agency can impose additional standards that exceed these. Some agencies require additional educational achievement or those dealing with some level of prior experience.

The Park County Sheriff Department has required recruitment procedures and processes that are less rigorous and demanding than that of many other agencies. This, coupled with a less attractive pay and benefit package, has resulted in our Department being viewed as an “entry” agency.

Obviously, since our Department essentially serves as an “entry” agency, Deputies are only required to meet minimum statutory requirements.

What should be the appropriate Pay and Benefit package?

The responsible Sheriff should always be seeking a Pay and Benefit package that enables their Department to attract and retain the best possible personnel. Unfortunately, the majority of funding decisions are made by others in the course of complex budgetary negotiations featuring a host of competing interests. Thus, having limited options, a Sheriff has to constantly juggle available funding to determine where the most important needs are evidenced. There is always the struggle between having an adequate force of frontline Patrol and Investigative personnel and funding support functions. Some spheres of Department operations require staffing and funding specifically defined through statute, and these are always a fundamental drain on available resources needed elsewhere.

How would increased pay and benefits be funded?

It would be very good if a Sheriff could simply appear before County Commissioners and only have to provide a logical and realistic explanation of the level of funding required to effectively support the scope and level of services his citizens deserved. However, that is not how things happen in the real world. The typical Sheriff is forced to constantly figure out new ways to provide an ever more demanding level and quality of law enforcement services with insufficient funding and the consequential lack of required staffing and other resources. Any candidate assurances of having a plan to increase personnel pay and benefits should be viewed with substantial skepticism.

What could be done to ensure that additional tax payer funding would be allocated on training and other targeted areas focused toward better prepared high quality Department personnel?

The most effective measure that ensures responsible action has to do with transparency. Those having served in law enforcement as frontline personnel understand the often extreme nature of such service. Left alone to make the most difficult and consequential decisions, sometimes involving matters of life and death, the frontline Deputy has to have the benefit of the most exhaustive and relevant training and experience. The best and brightest rookie Deputies have most commonly used our Department as their first law enforcement experience, obtaining required skill and additional experience that they take elsewhere. The only way for taxpayers to even know whether funding is being allocated to where it is most urgently needed is to elect a Sheriff who is committed to spend

taxpayer funds in a responsible and transparent manner. There is no realistic way to hold any Sheriff accountable for how he allocates funding, and voters will have to elect someone who will commit to viewing tax payer support as carrying an associated public trust that must not be violated.

What will you direct Department personnel to have as a focus in their duties?

I will direct Department personnel to perform their individual duties in a manner that evidences a profound appreciation of the trust that our citizens have placed in them, and the responsibility that attaches to such trust and confidence. Whatever the intent and commitment held by a Sheriff and his Command Staff, the most important impressions the public draws about a law enforcement agency, are those resulting from a personal interaction with a frontline Department representative. Frontline Deputies, through their interactions, effectively define the impressions of courtesy, commitment, and professionalism the citizen will form about the entire agency. Too often, Department superiors consider the frontline representative to be less important or significant in the overall agency operations and mission. Nothing could be further from the reality. In any incident and subsequent investigative process, much that will define later success resides in the initial actions and procedures of the responding frontline Deputies. Actions the responding Deputy takes, typically have the most direct influence on the following processes and the way in which the case proceeds. Contrary to most thinking, frontline personnel have to be the best and brightest in any law enforcement structure, for a number of extremely important reasons. This is where the “entry” Department philosophy is most damaging and adversely consequential.

What is your position on Civil Asset Forfeiture?

Civil Asset Forfeiture should be used in only the most rare and egregious instances. Where such action is appropriate is in instances where it is morally justified due to the costs or adverse consequence the underlying offender actions have caused to society or social interests. In such instances, asset forfeiture may be justified in sending a powerful message to the offender and others who are engaged in, or contemplating like behavior. Asset forfeiture may also be

appropriate as a means to recover costs associated with law enforcement effort to address the criminal activity. Taxpayers have a reasonable right to expect that those having engaged in criminal activities, particularly those having substantial community impact, bear significant responsibility to reimburse costs imposed.

What would you do differently in regards to the Long investigation?

While the Flume editor is correct in pointing out significant problems with transparency relative to the ongoing Long murder investigation, this particular matter serves to highlight the larger problem with our Sheriff Department being an “entry” law enforcement agency. Potential voters need to understand that all law enforcement agencies are not equal in ability and resources. The fundamental problem with this concept is that when a criminal incident happens in a venue associated with an “entry “ agency, competent initial response and subsequent investigation requires the same level and quality of law enforcement response no matter where the incident occurs. Such an incident has to be addressed with the same level of intensity and professionalism as would be applied in the most advanced and resourced agency. In actual fact, citizens expect no less. Here is where the deficiencies existing in the “entry” agency come to be most apparent and damaging. Considering the problems associated with the lack of transparency, some of which is understandable and appropriate, what can be determined is that there appears to be a problem with the initial law enforcement response that has compounded and complicated all later associated law enforcement process. The missing person aspect, coupled with the coincidental arson, and the nature of the 911 call, should have alerted investigators that the situation merited a high level law enforcement response with an all hands on deck approach. If you give the matter that kind of initial attention, later finding that it was not of the significance first thought, no harm, no foul. However, if you fail to get it right at first, nothing that can be done later can make things right. Critical facts and evidence cannot be later replicated or discovered. The failure to provide timely press updates reveals the problematic intersection between perception and reality. When an agency fails to perceive the level of community interest and the attached underlying fear and concern, public trust and confidence in the agency is greatly diminished.

What is your thought regarding the importance of school resource officers?

Recent school shootings only serve to demonstrate the importance of having adequately trained and equipped law enforcement personnel present within our schools. A problem with the current Department strategy is that Department Command has considered the school resource officer (SRO) staffing as being arbitrary and discretionary, rather than as a critical and truly important agency priority. Few instances that an agency will ever have to deal with will involve the level of violence, social trauma, or numbers of individuals killed and injured, as the typical school shooting incident. Such potential criminal incidents need to be taken quite seriously by law enforcement agencies.

What about Deputies and other Department personnel having been involved in criminal or other questionable activity?

The public served by a particular law enforcement agency need to be assured that the Department personnel that serve are of the highest moral and ethical character and reflective of the kind of people worthy of public trust and having the legal authority to use appropriate force, to include deadly force, where necessary in performance of statutory law enforcement duties. Society entrusts law enforcement personnel with a significantly higher level of authority inherent in performance of their duties. This authority allows law enforcement personnel to have the ability to initiate imposition of penalties on citizens that can have a devastating emotional and financial impact. With such authority comes a societal expectation that such power is to be wielded by individuals of outstanding character, emotional stability, and judgement. Any Department employee having exhibited that they are not worthy of public trust, or lacking suitability to represent the Department will not serve with the Park County Sheriff Department.

What would you have done differently relating to the Wirth eviction operation?

The Wirth eviction operation was essentially mismanaged from start to finish. Aspects of the operation, from initial lack of planning and operational process, through to tragic completion, reveal a painful truth. SWAT team operations are difficult enough when conducted within the context of the professionally managed, and sufficiently resourced, law enforcement agency. It is extremely difficult to even contemplate SWAT operations being conducted in the “entry” agency context. The majority of agencies conducting SWAT operations

have only their most experienced and trusted officers assigned to SWAT teams and as personnel overseeing SWAT operations. Every agency wants to have the glamour and exposure associated with having a SWAT team, but the “entry” agency cannot field the personnel and resources necessary to have an effective SWAT resource. The Wirth eviction operation should have been conducted consistent with accepted SWAT tactical concepts and practices. We now know that having prior knowledge that Wirth had issued repeated public threats toward law enforcement, Command staff should have anticipated Wirth’s noncompliance and planned for this. Any SWAT operation planning includes a required prior reconnaissance component intended to identify complicating factors. These factors would include features of the property that would present unusual challenges, access points, required knowledge of the structure interior, any structural improvements taken to harden or reinforce entry points, availability of weapons, potential threat to neighboring residents, and ability to contain a subject should they escape the residence.

Clearly the operation was conducted without any aspect of reasonable planning and preparation, with Deputies ordered into a residence having insufficient knowledge of the structure and what they would encounter upon entry. Worse, a Deputy having no SWAT, or other tactical training, was assigned to effect the initial entry, without adequate protective equipment.

What makes the operation and aftermath even more tragic is that while Command personnel exhibited no concern about important problematic aspects of the operation, several of the frontline Deputies expressed their concern when ordered to make entry, having these summarily dismissed. I can assure our citizens that no such operation would ever be contemplated, or conducted, should I be elected Sheriff.