

NEWS

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 18, 2012

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Supervisors unanimously appoint McMahon as Sheriff

The Board of Supervisors today unanimously appointed Assistant Sheriff John McMahon to fill the unexpired term of Sheriff Rod Hoops, who plans to retire on December 31.

The appointment was supported by the county's police chiefs and other law enforcement leaders, officials from communities that contract with the Sheriff's Department for law enforcement services, and other community leaders and groups interviewed by an ad hoc committee of the Board of Supervisors.

The ad hoc committee, consisting of Board of Supervisors Chair Josie Gonzales and Supervisor Gary Ovitt, was charged by the board with reviewing and recommending options for the appointment of a new sheriff.

Chair Gonzales said the committee concluded that knowledge of the state's prison realignment program, experience in jail management, and a strong relationship with the county's cities and towns were qualities the new sheriff must possess, and that none of those from outside the department who expressed an interest in the appointment possessed those qualities. McMahon was the only person from within the department who expressed an interest in the appointment.

In addition to those qualifications, Chair Gonzales said those with whom she spoke had a very high opinion of Deputy Chief McMahon.

"Statements attributed to John McMahon included 'highly ethical', 'hard working', 'great reputation', 'fortitude', 'promotes diversity', 'good communicator', 'transparent', 'fair', 'diverse experience', 'strong community outreach', 'calm', 'engaged leader', 'a cop's cop', 'outstanding record', 'holds others and himself accountable,'" Chair Gonzales said.

Under the state's Open Meeting Law, the committee could not privately interview anyone interested in being appointed.

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"Based on all of our meetings John McMahon has the respect of the department and the law enforcement agencies he works with, the Public Defender, the District Attorney, and Probation," said Supervisor Ovitt. "It became very clear that the right man for the job at this time is John McMahon."

The County Charter states vacancies must be filled by appointment rather than special election. The committee looked at the possibility of conducting a special election to change the charter followed by a special election to fill the remainder of Hoops' term. But the committee concluded that approach would be unfeasible since it would cost more than \$3 million and the soonest a new sheriff could take office would be January 2014. Until then the department would have to be led by an unappointed, unelected interim sheriff.

The committee instead recommended, and the Board unanimously endorsed, development of a charter amendment that would give the Board the option of calling a special election to fill future vacancies.

To those who had suggested an appointment rather than a special election might shortchange the electorate, Chair Gonzales pointed out that the County Charter had been adopted by voters.

"The County Charter was adopted by a vote of the people. The charter is the will of the people. Making an appointment is the will of the people," she said.

Chair Gonzales also candidly expressed frustration that Hoops had publicly endorsed McMahon as his successor, and assured the public that the outgoing sheriff's endorsement had no bearing on the Board's decision to appoint McMahon.

"We have taken into account everything that was submitted to us," she said. "Mr. McMahon deserves this, and not because the sheriff said so. Mr. McMahon needed to stand on his own, and he has done that."

A native of California and a resident of San Bernardino County since 1967, Assistant Sheriff McMahon attended Apple Valley High School and his formal education includes an Associate of Science degree in Police Science from Victor Valley College and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice Management from Union University. In 2007, he was inducted into the Victor Valley College Alumni Hall of Fame.

McMahon began his career with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department in 1985. As one of two assistant sheriffs, he is responsible for Criminal Operations for the entire organization.

Prior to his appointment to Assistant Sheriff, McMahon held the position of Deputy Chief with responsibilities over the vast Desert Patrol Stations, as well as the department's largest bureau, the Detentions and Corrections Bureau. He provided oversight to four large jail facilities.

McMahon held the position of Captain and commanded three separate divisions – the Central Detention Center, the West Valley Detention Center, and as Chief of Police for his hometown, Apple Valley. He held a variety of positions as a deputy sheriff, detective, sergeant, and lieutenant.