

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



**FROM:** Supervisor Marion Ashley

**SUBMITTAL DATE:**  
March 20, 2013

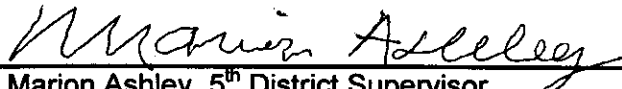
**SUBJECT:** 1.2 Budget Doctrine - Roadmap for Public Safety

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** That the Board of Supervisors reaffirm and approve the following:

1. The most important role of local government is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public;
2. County budget decisions over the next 5 years should set public safety as the top County priority;
3. Direct staff to bring forward a plan that increases Sheriff's Department staffing to 1.2 deputies per 1,000 residents within five years beginning in FY 13/14;
4. Direct Staff to project County budget decisions beyond FY 13/14 on the basis of increasing and maintaining within 5 years, a Sheriff's Department with a minimum of 1.2 deputies per 1,000 thousand residents to protect public safety;
5. Direct staff to meet with representatives of all public safety and County Criminal Justice system over the next 45 days to develop a strategy that will establish and maintain a working balance with the Sheriff's Department, Fire, District Attorney, Probation Department and Public Defender; and
6. The Board will continue efforts to make County government more efficient and seek new revenue opportunities in order to fund County Jail construction.

Departmental Concurrence

**BACKGROUND:** As the nation and Riverside County begin to emerge from the Great Recession, the signs of recovery are slowly becoming evident. Housing prices in our County jumped 18 % between February 2012 and February 2013. Although higher than the national average, unemployment in Riverside County has been declining from 15.2% in January 2010 to 11.1% in January 2013 (according to the latest State of California statistics) showing we are moving in the right direction. Job growth is occurring in trade, transportation and utility sectors in Riverside County and across the Inland region, with modest gains occurring in professional and business service sectors. Building permit applications in the County rose 19 percent during the first six months of FY 12/13, compared to the same period in FY 11/12. Planning applications to the County are up 23% over the same period. Despite numerous ongoing budgetary and economic challenges, our County is advancing on the pathway toward recovery and a more vibrant economy.

  
Marion Ashley, 5<sup>th</sup> District Supervisor

Dep't Recomm.:  Consent  Policy  
Per Exec. Ofc.:  Consent  Policy

Prev. Agn. Ref.:

District: 5

Agenda Number:

Amid these positive signs, I am increasingly concerned that the economic recovery of our County could be derailed by the threat rising crime rates poses, not only to our residents' safety and well-being, but also to our continued economic revival. We have heard from numerous economists that our County lies in the pathway of future growth. But those opportunities could be disrupted by worsening crime and public safety concerns. Businesses and industries, considering where to open, expand or relocate, have historically avoided communities and regions with known and/or perceived persistent crime problems. Due to severe budgetary constraints in recent years, our Board was forced to make some tough decision that includes cutting the budget of our Sheriff's Department by 33% since 2009.

As a result, patrols in unincorporated communities in the County have suffered. According to our Sheriff, the ratio of deputies to residents in unincorporated parts of the county fell from 1.2 per 1,000 in 2009 to 0.75 per 1,000 in 2012 and remains at that rate currently. This has resulted in longer response times and a decline in proactive policing. In September, the Board approved additional funding for increased Sheriff's Department patrols in unincorporated areas. We also agreed with the Sheriff that the County's deputy-to-resident ratio should be 1.0 per 1,000, as is recommended by law enforcement experts. As a result, our Board authorized the hiring of an additional 50 deputies to offset past staffing reductions. However, training new deputies is not instantaneous; the process can take up to a year or longer, meaning those new deputies won't be patrolling the streets until 2014.

In the meantime, Riverside County shows an increase in violent and property crimes in unincorporated areas around Hemet, Perris, Lake Elsinore, Cabazon, Palm Desert, Indio and Blythe. Assault with a deadly weapon and burglaries have risen in unincorporated communities in Southwestern Riverside County. It is with a heavy heart that I continue to see reports of serious and violent crime within my District.

Less than two months ago, Maria Gonzalez, 51, and her 25-year-old daughter, Connie were attacked and stabbed to death on the afternoon of February 4 while they were walking in the 29000 block of Central Avenue of Nuevo. This tragic and senseless attack has left the community shaken. It also reinforced to me that the most important role of local government is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public, and that includes making sure we have well-staffed and well-supplied law enforcement. It also means that simply increasing patrols will not have the impact we desire if there are no jail facilities to hold the arrestees. AB 109 State Prison Realignment has worsened the critical County issue of overflowing jails. Due to AB 109, jail overcrowding resulted in the early release of 6,990 inmates in 2012 in Riverside County and, as the Community Corrections Partnership reported earlier this month, this equates to 22% more state prison inmates being released to Riverside County than expected under realignment last year. 67% of the inmates released due to AB 109, were classified as "high risk" ex-offenders – far above the original estimate of 40%. Additionally, these high risk ex-offenders transferred to the County by AB109 must be supervised by County Probation Officers, creating an additional impact to an already overburdened system. Crowding at County jail facilities, exacerbated by AB 109, has some arrestees being discharged from custody within a few short hours of being arrested. This is completely and totally unacceptable.

We must also bring job growth to Riverside County to preserve and enhance the quality of life for our County's residents and communities. New businesses and economic development provide the revenue that pays for public services, including public safety. Our County must attract new industries and new investment to Riverside County in education, business, professional and high-tech sectors. Our residents deserve it. But these efforts will be threatened by a persistently rising crime rate and perceptions that our communities are at risk.

A study last year by The Center for American Progress found that, on average, a reduction in a given year of one homicide in a zip code causes a 1.5 percent increase in housing values in that same zip code the following year.

Every member of our Board maintains an unshakeable commitment to public safety and law enforcement at all levels. The realities of hard economic times and unfunded state and federal mandates have forced our Board to make difficult budgetary decisions across all departments. In the coming months, staff and the Board will begin preparing the FY 2013/14 Budget. I believe it is absolutely imperative that our Board prioritize our commitment to public safety, remaining mindful as to how a rising crime rate will negatively impact our County's recovery.

As the Board begins its deliberations on the FY 13/14 budget, I believe it is incumbent upon us to reaffirm our commitment to public safety by instituting a "1.2 Budget Doctrine" that establishes public safety as its top priority. Doing so not only protects the health, safety and well-being of our residents, it provides a healthy environment in which to grow our economy and expand our County's future opportunities. As the Board of Supervisors, our job is to provide direction and establish priorities.

I would request that the Board join me in directing staff to work with representatives of the Riverside County public safety and criminal justice system over the next 45 days to plan for implementation on how the County will reach these goals beginning in FY 2013/2014. This plan should include projected costs and timelines, providing clarity and direction on the pathway the County must follow to achieve 1.2 deputies per 1,000 residents within five years and, commensurately, to reduce and ultimately eliminate overcrowding in our jails. Adoption of such a plan will send a clear, strong message to our residents and communities as well as existing and future economic interests that Riverside County is dedicated to protecting our residents and enhancing their quality of life as we look forward to a strong economic recovery.