



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

HALL OF JUSTICE

ALEX VILLANUEVA, SHERIFF



January 17, 2020

Brian K. Williams, Executive Director
Civilian Oversight Commission
World Trade Center
350 South Figueroa Street, Suite 288
Los Angeles, California 90071

Dear Mr. Williams:

**RESPONSE TO CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT COMMISSION MEETING
HELD ON JANUARY 16, 2020**

This letter is in regard to the Civilian Oversight Commission (COC) meeting held on January 16, 2020, wherein Max Huntsman, Office of Inspector General (OIG), presented on the exchange of information between the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) and OIG. In addition, Mr. Huntsman provided a verbal report on the alleged harassment of families impacted by officer-involved shootings.

Mr. Huntsman presented a multiple page PowerPoint presentation that was not forwarded to Assistant Sheriff Steve Gross or Chief Matthew Burson in advance of the meeting in order for them to make meaningful comment and participate in the discussion and presentation, which our understanding is one of the purposes of these meetings. At the very least, it would have allowed the LASD representatives to be in a position to properly rebut these allegations during the meeting rather than at a later date. Moreover, Mr. Huntsman formally announced the OIG is "out of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)" without notice, even though the MOA requires the withdrawal in advance and in writing.

As you are well aware, during the course of this meeting, Assistant Sheriff Gross and Chief Burson were insulted, accused of alleged improper conduct,

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subjected to foul language, and generally subjected to disrespectful behavior primarily by Mr. Huntsman and the public with no interference by anyone to mitigate this treatment.

In order for the LASD to continue to partner with the COC, the following LASD concerns will have to be addressed through meaningful dialogue at our upcoming LASD-COC meeting.

- From the LASD's experiences at these meetings, the COC has become a forum to attack and ridicule LASD rather than to create a bridge between LASD and the community (as advertised).
- The COC does not address or admonish the OIG in any way during its presentations where the only goal appears to make the COC an OIG forum to slander the LASD and their personnel.
- The OIG consistently misstates facts, over exaggerates, or presents untruths or partial facts, as facts without proof. Since the LASD is not provided information ahead of time, these statements are allowed to be made without rebuttal.

In addition, the format of these meetings allows the OIG to run the meeting like a courtroom with opening statements and allegations, without testimony from the LASD, as if LASD were on trial, which creates an adversarial atmosphere with no ability to have meaningful dialogue on these important issues to be discussed. The OIG performs to the crowd of community activists at the expense of the LASD and the overall County.

LASD executives were assigned to attend the COC meetings in an attempt to better assist the COC and publicly foster good relations and collaboration; however, it appears the COC is ignoring the unprofessional decorum of the OIG and devaluing their relationship with LASD, despite their good will intentions.

In addition, when LASD proposed we move forward and attempt to address the issues with new staff, the COC chose to belittle the comment. The OIG recklessly and falsely accused me of being a liar and accused the LASD of violating the County Code at a public meeting.

When the LASD requested to speak to counsel before answering to the allegations, the OIG (despite his attorney role to the COC and Board of Supervisors) openly ridiculed the request.

County Counsel assigned to the COC was present and neither admonished the OIG or made any comment to protect the County or COC from this risk management issue.

The OIG ensures subpoena power to the COC, as a fix all, and threatens to use it at every corner, despite the LASD offer to work together. Mr. Huntsman ensures the COC there is no need to collaborate because he can fix everything with subpoena power. Mr. Huntsman has made it clear that he intends to continue his adversarial relationship with LASD in his quest for subpoena power.

Mr. Williams, you as the Executive Director of the COC, were informed of these concerns after the meeting. Your response was the OIG is not part of the COC, but we could meet and discuss the issues and we invite that discussion.

The Chair of the COC, Patti Giggans, was also informed of the concerns, but she did not affirmatively say she would take any action.

The environment in the COC has deteriorated to a point where an LASD panel member in uniform becomes an object of ridicule and attack for the OIG, COC, and a small group of community activists who regularly attend, rather than dialogue and constructive comments that could lead to improvements within the LASD.

I bring this to your attention because this is not the first meeting where the foregoing issues have occurred. Since this is becoming a pattern, it requires me to ensure the ability of my personnel to be treated fairly and equally in your forum. To that end, until the commission addresses the treatment of the LASD's representatives and prevents further meetings such as the one that occurred yesterday, I will curtail the amount of representatives attending in the future and instead will opt to have County Counsel represent the Department at future meetings to respond to OIG's legal commentary, and one non uniformed member from the LASD to attend and observe.

In regard to special presentations, if the COC would like a presentation on a particular subject, such as Commander Marks' presentation on the body worn

Mr. Williams

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cameras policy, the LASD will provide a representative for those requests with proper advanced notice.

Your understanding and anticipated cooperation is appreciated. I hope that our efforts to partner with our communities improves going forward. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me at (213) 229-3000.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alex Villanueva', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

ALEX VILLANUEVA
SHERIFF