

County of Santa Clara  
Board of Supervisors  
Supervisorial District 5  
Supervisor S. Joseph Simitian



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**DATE:** August 31, 2021

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** S. Joseph Simitian, Supervisor  
Susan Ellenberg, Vice President

**SUBJECT:** Resolution Declaring No Confidence in Sheriff Laurie Smith

**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Adopt Resolution Declaring No Confidence in Sheriff Laurie Smith. (Simitian/Ellenberg)

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

At the August 17, 2021 Board of Supervisors meeting, the Board unanimously approved the disclosure of information relating to a number of troubling incidents that occurred within and around our jail, requested reports on the status of jail reforms in the County, and referred this information to a number of regulatory and/or enforcement agencies and organizations. The events discussed at that meeting deserve careful investigation and consideration. Unfortunately, however, they are only a subset of a much longer and wider-ranging list of questionable actions and occurrences that have taken place in recent years.

The attached resolution enumerates a number of these instances individually and in detail. Considered in their entirety, these events require a clear statement from our Board that we no longer have confidence in the Sheriff and her ability to perform her job duties in a fashion that meets the minimum expectations associated with the Office to which she was elected. This is not an action to be taken lightly, and it is with regret that we find it necessary.

In any large organization, culture flows from the top. There is a reason that, following Michael Tyree's tragic death, the County's own Blue-Ribbon Commission listed a need for a change in leadership in Custody Operations as one of their top two recommendations. While our Board is not in a position to unilaterally effectuate such a change in leadership, we can offer a clear statement of no confidence.

Given the continuing patterns of behavior detailed in the attached resolution, we find ourselves left with one regrettable conclusion. We no longer have confidence that Sheriff Laurie Smith is able to faithfully, effectively, and ethically perform the duties of Sheriff.