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Questionnaire for 2016 Massachusetts candidates for Sheriff

1. What is your corrections philosophy?

My corrections philosophy is to afford every offender the opportunity to take advantage of our evidence-based effective programming to address their individual criminogenic behaviors that have led these men and women to incarceration in the first place. I believe in holding all offenders accountable for their behavior and there is no better way to do this than through addressing the needs of each offender from day one of their incarceration. For example, I know the obstacles that are in play when somebody is released from jail going back to the community. It is crucial that the staff at the Hampden County Sheriff's Department work alongside each offender and assist them with finding gainful employment, an a safe and secure home plan and fostering a relational model with the wrap-around services agencies in the community. This is what we call the essential three-legged stool of reentry. Without employment, housing and the ability to attend your wraparound services and community appointments, your efforts to live a law abiding life are going to be met with devastating challenges. My administration along with all the staff at the Hampden County Sheriff's Department will work diligently every day to ensure each returning citizen from jail is offered the tools, the education, and the after incarceration support to be successful and productive members of our Hampden County community.

2. What are your qualifications for being sheriff of York county?

I am a 23-year Corrections Professional who understands the complexities and responsibilities of the Office of Sheriff. I am an academy trained Correctional Officer, promoted to Corporal, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Assistant Deputy Superintendent, Deputy Chief of Security and presently Assistant Superintendent of the Daily Operations of the jail.

Areas of my supervision: Offender housing and discipline, Training & Staff Development, Standards Department, Offender Programming, Commander/Administrator of the Tactical Response Team.

Education: Bachelors of Science from Western New England College, Masters in Business Administration (MBA) from the Elms College, Certified in mediation tactics

3. What policies of the former or current sheriff would you change in why?

A Nick Cocchi administration would put more attention and focus into victim services for the community. I am a firm believer in restorative justice and allowing the victim to have a say and understanding of what path their offender is taking. It is important that the offenders understand how they have hurt their victims and their community. I will work more aggressive in ensuring that nonviolent offenders with substance-abuse issues are diverted to community treatment beds rather than incarcerated in a hard jail cell. I do not believe that we should criminalize or institutionalize addiction.

**4. What are your views on building a new county house of correction or jail?
Expanding the existing house of correction or Jail?**

I do not believe there is a need to build more county jail's or house of corrections. I also don't believe there is a need for expanding them as well. I would like to see the jail and house of corrections populations drop. The Hampden County Sheriff's Department has reduced its population 33.4% in the past 8 years. I would however like to see the judges have more of an opportunity to use their discretion by looking at each offender's individual case and then the judge can make a more appropriate diversion or sentence option.

5. Your views on transparency: if elected will you issue annual reports that include information on public accreditation findings, prison rape elimination act audits, suicides and lawsuits against the sheriff's department (whether filed by prisoners, employees, attorneys or family members)?

I absolutely believe in full transparency. It should be known that the Hampden County Sheriff's Department makes public the following: Prison Rape Elimination Act audits, Department of Public Health audits, as well as the Department of Corrections audits. I do not have any issue with transparency in regards to suicides and lawsuits, however due to the privacy of families of offenders as well as offenders themselves extreme caution will be used. I will cooperate with all requests. I will however uphold the law when it comes to any type of CORI information.

6. Impact of legislation or state wide administrative policies:

a. Do you support legislation or policy changes that could result in fewer people sentenced to incarceration at your county house of correction? If so please give examples.

I believe I have answered this earlier in the questionnaire. I believe that diversion is necessary for substance-abuse nonviolent offenders who need treatment beds over a Hard jail cell.

b. Do you support legislation or policy changes that could result in fewer people help pretrial at your County Jail? If so, please give examples.

I have researched a program that is being utilized in Essex County Ma. This program is geared to the pre-trial drug offender, and is allows them to be given an

opportunity to have an intense 30-day detox and treatment program prior to going back in front of the judge. The program is an opportunity for the offender to make a positive change in their life with completed treatment and education. With this treatment and educational classes, the judges have been not sentencing them to jail time, and they have been diverting them to treatment beds in the community for continued support and assistance for their successful recovery.

c. Do you support legislation or policy changes that could result in more people sentenced to incarceration at your county house of correction? If so, please give examples.

I will always have a jail cell for any individual who is selling drugs and pushing the poison that is killing so many innocent and vulnerable people. I also believe a jail cell is necessary for the violent offenders with gun charges who are terrorizing our communities. As sheriff of Hampden County, it is my responsibility to protect and serve the citizens of Hampden County. I will be as progressive and fair as I can in running a correctional institution that supports that philosophy.

d. Do you support legislation or policy changes that could result in more people held pretrial at your County Jail? If so give examples.

Again I do not support legislation or policy that would bring more people to jail. I will however always have a jail cell for dangerous people who are an imminent threat to our communities.

7. For people who have not been convicted of any offense do you think it is appropriate to lock them up for drugs or alcohol treatment at the county house of correction, instead of being sent to a community-based healthcare facility? Why or why not.

I believe that nonviolent substance abuse or nonviolent alcohol offenders do not belong in jail. We should not criminalize nor institutionalize addiction. Addiction is a disease and it is a public health crisis not a criminal justice issue. I will work extremely hard in making sure that resources are provided to our community based healthcare facilities to support this growing population.

8. Your views on the basics of incarceration:

a. How do you think pretrial and sentenced prisoners should primarily spend their time?

Both pretrial and sentenced prisoners should be spending their time in educational and vocational classrooms being educated how to be a more productive citizen in society. We should be addressing substance abuse issues, we should be offering vocational training, and we should be providing mock interviews, along with dress for success classes, resume development and family reunification education.

b. What educational opportunities currently exist at your county house of correction? At the jail? Are there waiting list to participate? Do you support increasing or decreasing those opportunities?

There are many educational opportunities at the Hampden County Sheriff's Department. For example: Substance abuse treatment, anger management, domestic violence, victim impact, culinary arts, learn to earn, sex offender groups, construction classes, serve safe certificates, OSHA 10 cards, graphic arts instruction, welding instruction and many more. I believe in a continuous review of all program curriculum so that what we are offering is effective and working for our offender population.

c. What employment/job training opportunities exist at your county house of correction? At the jail? Are there waiting list to participate? Do you support increasing or decreasing those opportunities?

I have mentioned many of these in the prior question. I absolutely believe in increasing all employment and job training opportunities for our offender population. Employment is a very important piece of a successful reentry. We have four job developers at the Hampden County Sheriff's Department and this past year we placed 300 offenders into the workforce post incarceration. We need to do more and we need to do better, but I understand the importance of this issue.

d. What mental health\substance use disorder services exist at your county house of correction? At the jail? Are there waiting list to participate? Do you support increasing or decreasing no services?

There is not a waiting list for these services. Our mental health clinicians are mandated by policy and standards to see an offender within a specific time frame. I am a firm supporter of mental health and substance abuse services at our facility. We have a mental health stabilization unit, as well as a 150 bed substance-abuse unit at the main facility. We offer substance abuse treatment at all levels of step down throughout our

department. We have an addiction center presently in Holyoke that houses up to 150 offenders. We also have substance abuse and mental health services at our Women's Correctional Center.

e. What personal growth programs parentheses parenting, anti-violence, etc. parentheses exist at your county house of correction? At the jail? Are there waiting list to participate? Do you support increasing or decreasing these opportunities?

We do have parenting classes, domestic violence and anger management classes presently at the Hampden County Sheriff's Department. I will work hard to make sure we continue to have state of the art programming on these issues. At times there are waiting list for participants, but we have a weekly mapping meeting and each offender has an individual service plan to ensure that they will not get lost in the shuffle. They will receive the proper treatment and education they need when they are with us.

9. What are your views on isolating prisoner's (sometimes called solitary confinement) as punishment for violating house of correction\Jail rules?

I prefer to use the term specialized housing. This area is necessary for short term confinement for offenders who are exhibiting harmful behavior towards themselves or others. I am very proud that I was instrumental in assisting in the development of our segregation reform policy at the Hampden County Sheriff's Department several years ago. The average stay in this unit is 15 to 17 days. We are very proud of how we deal with our most difficult offenders.

10. Your views on reentry in recidivism:

a. If elected\reelected, how would you ensure that prisoners leaving your county house of correction have the best chance for successful returning to their communities?

I believe I am the only candidate that has a true understanding on how to successfully reenter offenders back into the community. There is a three-legged stool approach that increase every offender's percentage of long term success. That stool is employment, housing, and accessibility and attendance to the community wraparound services. The Hampden County Sheriff's Department has an aftercare incarceration support services building located on State Street in Springfield. This agency will

connect our returning offenders with the proper services needed to maintain a safe, healthy and law abiding lifestyle.

b. What is the current rate of recidivism for prisoners leaving York County House of correction? What would you do to reduce that rate?

Our one-year recidivism rate is 15%. Our three-year recidivism rate is 33.7%. The important number here is the three-year recidivism rate of 33.5%. I feel that if you are out of incarceration for three years you are well on your way to recovery and living a law-abiding lifestyle. To reduce this rate year after year, I would continue to challenge the staff of the Hampden County Sheriff's Department to keep building relational model relationships with the offenders and the community agencies. Walking into a familiar and friendly place is more likely to occur than an offender walking in cold to appointments in the community. Positive relationships breed longer recovery environments for the offenders is need of continued support.

11. Your views on incarcerated women:

a. Should gender specific medical care and education be provided?

Absolutely it should and it is being done at the Hampden County Sheriff's Department now. The HCSD is in full compliance with all standards dealing with Medical care for both the men and women populations.

b. Should women be forced to buy their own feminine hygiene products or should the house of correction/jail provide them?

Absolutely not, and at the Hampden County Sheriff's Department the women are not forced to buy these items they are issues to the women as need.

c. Should the HOC/Jail promote or facilitate meaningful contact with the women's children? If so, how?

Yes, and we do this with contact visits, mother child visits, parenting classes and counseling efforts.

12 Your views on pregnant/post-partum prisoners:

a. Are you familiar with the 2014 legislation on pregnant and post-partum prisoners (M.G.L. chapter 127, section 118)?

Yes

b. Is your county HOC/Jail in compliance with that law?

Yes

c. Do you support House bill, H.3679, "An Act to Ensure Compliance with the Anti-Shackling Law for Pregnant Incarcerated Women"?

Yes

13. What are your views on videotaping strip searches of prisoners?

The trend in corrections is more cameras especially in light of PREA. The idea is that cameras act as a deterrent to bad behavior and thereby protect staff and inmates from harm. However, that being said, the use of cameras must be regulated to ensure that an inmate's dignity and privacy is fully respected, which means that cross-gender viewing of inmates when they are unclothed must be strictly prohibited. The HCSD policies have always prohibited Cross-gender viewing of strip searches. In an effort to maximize the privacy and dignity of inmates who must, for security reasons, be stripped search we do not videotape this process. Instead, we have decided to have more than one officer present for strip searches, and to rely on the integrity and superior training of our officers to conduct themselves professionally at all times. Should an emergency situation arise, a camera may be used at the discretion of a supervisor to accurately record events in an effort to protect staff and inmates.

14. If you are now or were previously employed as a corrections or law enforcement officer, has a complaint or lawsuit ever been filed against you for excessive force, a civil rights violation, discrimination, or abuse of your authority? If so, please provide details and the outcome of the complaint/lawsuit.

No

End of Survey.....