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Kitsap County 2020 & 2021 Strategic Plan Update

Both 2020 and 2021 were turbulent years for many reasons. The impact of COVID, police reform, and staffing challenges reverberated through both years and had profound impacts both short term and long term.

The KCSO Strategic Plan was written and projected to last five years from 2017 through 2021. Our strategic plan outlined four different initiatives. The initiatives of Culture, Resources, Technology and Facilities, Crime Prevention, and Community Outreach and Accreditation were the focus areas of approximately forty projects recorded in the plan. Although it was thought that the forty projects may be completed in one year, many took several years. Some projects were not well defined and were later discarded. Looking at the period of the strategic plan, we did accomplish most of the well-defined projects/goals we had recorded.

2020 and 2021 though brought an era of quick and drastic change and priorities quickly pivoted as the COVID pandemic had a tremendous impact on our operations and abilities. Effects of the pandemic appear to be lifting as we begin to pass through 2022 and the hope is that we will be able to return to more normal operations.

Police reform dramatically affected operations in 2021 as we learned of thirteen major pieces of new legislation dealing with police reform and these too affected many areas of our business and how we conduct our services. New laws passed in the first quarter of 2021 had to be quickly codified in policy and procedure and new training accomplished to bring operations and staff into compliance. In addition to laws, many best practices were also reviewed, and many were updated as police and criminal justice reform efforts of 2020 and 2021 were incorporated.

Staffing challenges and turnover impacted our operations greatly in 2020 and 2021. With numerous very tenured employees retiring and others choosing to leave the agency or profession, we had several dramatic changes. Sheriff Gary Simson retired in mid-2021 and Sheriff John Gese took office. Many senior leadership positions changed with promotions to fill these roles. In fact, many in our ranks of senior, mid, and entry-level management have churned in 2021 with many people in new positions and taking on new or different leadership roles.

Staff turnover also impacted many other ranks including deputies, corrections officers, and support staff. Many new employees are going through training and have relatively



short periods of time in the position and significant efforts have been directed towards recruiting, hiring, and training. As new members and leaders start to operate in their new positions, our agency is moving forward with new energy and new direction. In 2021 due to the significant attrition, hiring has lagged behind the ability to fill positions and train employees and due to this, we have had to quickly re-prioritize causing us to direct staff resources to our core business functions to the detriment of other areas of operation and programs.

As we enter 2022, we still face significant staff turnover and we will continue to focus on recruiting, hiring, and training to address this issue. With the belief that we may see some slowing of this churn, we hope to be able to add back services that have been lost or redirect staff resources to respond to new challenges and the needs in our community.

All these conditions experienced in 2020 and 2021 have made the need to re-visit agency strategic planning and update our plan for the agency moving forward.

Before going forward with an update of our strategic plan, we recognized there were a few areas of the strategic planning process we needed to address and change.

The last two years have been a prime example of why most of an organization's planning should be short term and we will not be producing another five-year plan. If the last two years are any indication, the environment can change dramatically from year to year and a plan that is nimbler and more adaptable makes more sense. Additionally, in our first strategic plan we came up with many different goals and plans and some of those were not properly defined and with so many, took much longer than anticipated to work through them. Our new plan will limit the number of goals and initiatives to make the plan more manageable and create a better environment to prioritize and complete projects. We may still include long-term goals that can carry forward, but the hope is that the plan can be continuously updated as the agency moves into the future.

With that in mind, we are currently working on a new strategic planning effort. The executive staff, working with facilitators, have been working through the process of identifying areas for development while factoring in new challenges and opportunities that have been created over the last several years.

Areas of focus will include organizational development, incorporation of best practices, and service delivery.

The area of organizational development will include continuing to run our agency like a successful organization. As a \$46 million dollar operation, it is incumbent on us to run it in an efficient, effective, and responsible manner and be good stewards of our citizens' investment. A well-run organization hires and develops good people, creates a positive and constantly learning and improving the environment, and develops good programs and processes to best meet the needs of the organization and the citizens we serve.

The incorporation of best practices speaks to the goal of being a police agency that lives up to the expectations of its community and incorporates the best practices. We do this by working in partnership with our communities and we adhere to practices that confirm that we are a progressive, accountable, and transparent police organization.

Service delivery will focus on the services that are expected and needed by our community and how best we provide those services. Responding to crime and social disorder requires constant analysis and response. It also requires constant dialog with our communities. Additionally, determining the proper number of resources needed to meet the expectations of our growing community will mean working to keep pace with any increased demand for services with the proper number of staff needed and proper distribution and prioritization of the resources we have available.

While the new plan is still in development, we will be working internally with subject matter experts in our ranks to develop goals and strategies and will incorporate feedback from community partners and citizens as the process progresses.

We look forward to sharing more information soon as we progress.

Sheriff John Gese

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Gese', is positioned below the name 'Sheriff John Gese'.