

Executive Summary

On July 10, 2024, John Nibbelin, legal counsel for San Mateo County, hired Judge LaDoris H. Cordell (retired) to conduct an independent investigation into complaints and concerns raised by current and former members of the Sheriff's Office regarding Victor Aenlle, a member of Sheriff Christina Corpus's executive team. During the course of the investigation, additional issues related to the Sheriff's Office were identified and included in the scope of the inquiry.

Judge Cordell interviewed 40 current and former employees, both sworn and civilian, the vast majority of whom were complainants. The interviews were conducted by phone and were not recorded. Judge Cordell requested interviews with Victor Aenlle and Sheriff Corpus. Mr. Aenlle agreed to the request and spoke with Judge Cordell during a recorded phone call. Sheriff Corpus did not respond to Judge Cordell's request for an interview.

Judge Cordell investigated fifteen (15) allegations ranging from whether Mr. Aenlle and Sheriff Corpus had a personal relationship beyond mere friendship to claims of retaliation and abuse of authority, as well as Mr. Aenlle's assertion that he is a reserve deputy sheriff. This executive summary highlights seven (7) allegations and their abbreviated findings:

Allegation: Sheriff Corpus and Aenlle have a "personal relationship" that creates a conflict of interest.

Findings: Despite their denials, factual evidence indicates that Sheriff Corpus and Victor Aenlle have a personal relationship beyond mere friendship. In fact, evidence suggests they have had an intimate relationship. This relationship led Sheriff Corpus to cede control of the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office to Aenlle, a person with far more experience as an associate real estate broker at Coldwell Banker than in law enforcement. Sheriff Corpus violated the Sheriff's Office conflict-of-interest policy when she hired Aenlle, violated it by having Aenlle report directly to her, and violated it again by repeatedly recommending salary increases for him.

Sustained.

Allegation: Aenlle has not met the service requirements to be a reserve deputy sheriff.

Findings: Aenlle failed to meet the requirements to maintain his Level I reserve deputy status, as he claimed that his working hours as an executive director counted toward the volunteer service hours required for reserve deputies.

Sustained.

Allegation: Sheriff Corpus and her executive team practice retaliation and intimidation.

Findings: Fear of retaliation is widespread within the organization. In one case, Sheriff Corpus fired a deputy for cooperating with this investigation. In another, the sheriff improperly locked a captain out of her office after she submitted her resignation. In yet another case, Aenlle demoted and criticized a civilian employee for deciding to transfer to another agency. Other employees described similar retaliatory and abusive behaviors under the leadership of Corpus or Aenlle.

Sustained.

Allegation: Aenlle has exceeded and/or abused his authority with Sheriff Corpus's approval.

Findings: Aenlle exercises authority far beyond the supervision of civilian staff. With the sheriff's consent, Aenlle has positioned himself at the top of the chain of command, exercising broad and sometimes abusive authority over both civilian and sworn employees.

Sustained.

Allegation: Aenlle was in a conflict of interest while negotiating the lease for Broadway Property.

Findings: Aenlle played a significant role in securing a lease for a property for a new substation, facilitated by Coldwell Banker Real Estate ("CBRE"). Aenlle, an associate broker at CBRE, had a conflict of interest and should not have participated in the lease negotiations. Sheriff Corpus knew or should have known about Aenlle's relationship with CBRE and should have prevented him from participating in the transaction.

Sustained.

Allegation: Aenlle is not authorized to wear a badge similar to the gold badges worn by sworn employees.

Findings: Aenlle is a full-time salaried civilian employee, not a full-time salaried sworn peace officer. By wearing a gold badge, he may have committed a misdemeanor by deliberately wearing a false badge that could mislead civilians into believing he is a sworn officer with full police powers. Sheriff Corpus, by issuing the gold badge to Aenlle, may also have committed a misdemeanor.

Sustained.

Allegation: Sheriff Corpus has made and sent text messages containing racist and homophobic insults in the workplace.

Findings: Sheriff Corpus sent several homophobic slurs about a local municipal official via text message to an employee, and she made a racial slur in the presence of an employee. These

actions violated the county's Equal Employment Opportunity policy, which promises a workplace free from discrimination and harassment.

Sustained.

Lies, secrecy, intimidation, retaliation, conflicts of interest, and abuse of authority are hallmarks of the Corpus administration. Sheriff Corpus should resign, and Victor Aenlle's employment with the Sheriff's Office should be terminated immediately. Only new leadership can save this organization, which is mired in chaos and demoralization.