
Economy & Efficiency Commission Presentation

Editorial Note: Although every effort has been made to insure the accuracy of the material in this presentation, the scope of the material covered and the discussions undertaken lends itself to the possibility of minor transcription misinterpretations.

**PRESENTATIONS BY
Jerry E. Powers
Chief Probation Officer
Los Angeles County**

June 7, 2012

Overview of Los Angeles County

Chairman Barcelona greeted Chief Powers for Los Angeles County Probation Department (Probation) and welcomed him while turning it over for Chief Powers to speak to the Economy and Efficiency Commission.

Probation Department Overview and Challenges

Chief Powers stated that he is responsible for the daily operation of Probation and for formulating a long-term vision that will enhance administrative services and field operations. He stated that he is managing the largest Probation Department in the country, and oversees an annual budget of approximately \$547 million, a total of over 6,200 employees, and the supervision of approximately 60,000 adult and 20,000 juvenile probationers. He stated that the Chief Probation Officer, similar to other county department heads, reports directly to the county's Board of Supervisors.

Chief Powers stated that this week marks the 6 month of his 10 year in Los Angeles County as the Chief Probation Chief. He stated that he told a couple of the Board members that it has been the fastest six months of his life, but also the longest six months of his life. He stated that he has come into the department with a big task and a lot to do. He stated that he doesn't think anyone in the Commission is unfamiliar with all the challenges in the Probation Department. He stated that the department has had its issues over the last couple of years and received a clear mandate from the Board. He stated that part of the discussions and agreement when he became the Probation Chief was that the status quo was not acceptable in the department, and the department needs to change things from top to bottom. He stated that during the first six months as the Chief he has spent a lot of time observing the agency, looking at the processes, looking at the personnel and how they evaluate things.

Chief Powers stated that the department is in the process of completing a management audit/review. He stated that he is currently in discussions with the Board of Supervisor on how he would like to reconfigure the department and change up some of the organizational structure. He stated that one of the most significant changes he is looking at making is to decentralize the Probation management organizational structure. He

stated that currently the department has a reputation as a department that is managed from Downey, in other words, all of the decisions and directives happens from Downey. He stated that the department has 13 different camps, 3 juvenile halls, and approximately 30 different offices that surround Los Angeles County- with all critical as well as non-critical decisions made from Downey. He stated that this is not very effective nor efficient since it takes forever to make a decision, communicate the decision out, and it makes the department less responsive to the communities that are out there. He stated that as a part of his reorganization, the department is looking at pushing out the department's Bureau Chiefs to becoming District Chiefs or Area Commanders. He stated that the department will put them in each supervisorial district. He stated that there will be one Bureau Chief per district who will essentially be responsible for all things probation-related in that specific district. He stated that they will be accountable to the cities, police agencies, community-based organizations, the Board Districts, and all the entities that make up the district they are responsible for. He stated that one of the nice things is that Los Angeles County has gone through redistricting already. He stated that the population is fairly equal among the 5 districts. He stated that as a part of redistricting they have already taken into account community interests. He stated that it is his hope that by decentralizing and moving some of the authority out of Downey, the department can tailor some of the services more to the individual areas that they will be commanding as opposed to having a one-size-fits-all approach from Downey. He stated that he is currently working with the Board to get this implemented beginning July 1st.

Chief Powers stated that there are a lot of low hanging fruits in Probation. He stated that Probation has been neglected for quite a few years partially because of its own doing and partially because of things budget related. He stated that there are some things with respect to technology that the department can do that can make the department a little more effective. He stated that he has discussed already with the Board Offices about moving forward with Video Conferencing. He stated that the department had about \$400,000 that was set aside to purchase vans and pay for transportation for parents to go back and forth to camp for visitation. He stated that shortly after he arrived it seemed as if that was a waste of that amount of money. He stated that he asked why the department can't just simply setup some video conferencing in the facilities. He stated that by putting this function in the camps, juvenile halls, and regional facilities, it would help parents see their kids when they need to, it would enable Mental Health staff see the kids and the probation staff all at a lower cost. He stated that the department is going to take the educational reform money and mental health services money and leverage that money to expand the video conferencing at challenger. He stated he would like to see it spread quickly at all the Probation facilities. He stated that in phrase one, the department will have three regional areas, two units at challenger, and two other remote camps just to start to make sure all the bugs are worked out. He stated that he has been told by the IT staff that the bandwidth at each of the facilities is adequate to allow the department to be able to do this.

Chief Powers stated that the department has a lot of staff that go off on injury leave. He stated that the department has about 700 employees that are either off duty or on modified duty in Probation which equates to over 10% of the workforce. He stated that this is a huge cost to the County and to the department. He stated that one of the things he has been discussing with the Board of Supervisors is to allow the department to have the seed money to hire and train a couple of Workman's Comp Investigators. He stated that the department needs this because he has a strong sense that individuals aren't really legitimately utilizing the workman's Comp system the way it should be. He stated that if the department can get a couple of investigators who can focus specifically on these individuals and the department ends up with prosecutions, and scrutiny on how the injuries occurred, then the department could save money because half of them would come back. Chief Powers stated that at the closing of this fiscal year June 30th, the department has had a 28% reduction in workman's comp claims over the last fiscal year which is the largest decrease in the County. He stated that by reviewing the injuries and focusing on what it is that they are tripping over, and removing it so that it is no longer a hazard anymore, the department is able to drive the injuries down. He stated that the number of staff off has only decreased by 10% so the department still has those individuals out there who will find a way to injure themselves. He stated that that is one of the biggest gaps in the departments system.

Chief Powers stated that the third and final thing that may interest the E&E Commission is that Probation spent over \$1 million dollars a year to private counsel to go and represent the department at Civil Service

Hearings. He stated that because he recommends significant discipline, terminations, and long suspensions on violations, these violations ultimately get appealed to the Civil Service Commission. He stated that one of the proposals that he recommended to the Board was to allow the department to go hire three Civil Service Advocates. He stated that the department could pay for the three Civil Service Advocates with the reduction in money that the department is paying to outside counsel.

Realignment in Los Angeles County

Chief Powers stated that the County has approximately 1,000 individuals coming to Los Angeles County and being placed on local parole. He stated that they would have previously been paroled from the State system and monitored by State Parole Officers but now they will be placed under the jurisdiction of the Probation Department. He stated that there are individuals who were previously given State prison sentences and now instead of going from County Jail to the prison system when they received their prison sentences, they now remain in County Jail. He stated that there are approximately 500 local prison sentences a month being handed down by the courts. He stated that in year one, Los Angeles County received about \$112 million from the State to administer the program. He stated that for year two in the Governor's budget, Los Angeles County is projected to get about \$270 million. He stated that some would say that this is the beginning of the end of what we would call a civilized society that these inmates are going to go and burn houses down and steal and rob more homes. He stated that this program started on October 1st and fortunately for Los Angeles County, the Sheriff has capacity in his jails so the individuals being sentenced to local prison who would have gone to the State facility are going into the jails and some of the funding from the State is used to pay for the jail beds. He stated since October 1st, not a single individual in Los Angeles County has been released early that would have gone to prison. He stated that the inmates are doing the exact amount of time in the local jails that they would have done in the State prison.

Chief Powers stated that on the Parole side under Probation, no one has been released from State prison and placed on local parole under Los Angeles County's jurisdiction a day earlier than they would have prior to October 1st. He stated that no one is getting released from State prison earlier and no one is leaving County jail any earlier as if they would have gone to State prison. He stated that there is no additional felons on the street then would have been if October 1st realignment had never happened. He stated that the Sheriff is projecting that somewhere in between October of this year and the spring depending on what happens with sentencing they may reach capacity. He stated that part of that is driven by the Sheriff's commitment to close down a significant number of beds at Men's Central jail because of conditions there. He stated that it is a balancing act that the Sheriff has to do to keep his jail population under control. He stated that for Probation, the department is trying to hire additional staff as quickly as possible.

Chief Powers stated that the State system was fundamentally broken. The County had a recidivism rate of 70%, the inmates going in had a lower recidivism rate then when they got out. He stated that when the law passed that allowed the department after 6 months of community supervision with the inmates, the department terminated jurisdiction of them. After 12 months if they have sustained no violations and have not been returned to custody, the department has to terminate jurisdiction. He stated that one might see in the LA Times that the State is terminating their parole population after 6 months. He stated that in March 2012 there were about 1,300 paroles that were terminated jurisdiction by the State, but in April 2012 there were 8,700 terminated jurisdictions by the State which was the 6 month mark. He stated that the County is keeping the inmates longer under supervision and holding them accountable for a longer period of time then the State.

Questions

Commissioner Fuhrman asked what he is planning to do with the Camps. Chief Powers replied that they are going to keep the institutions a part of one centralized function as will the Juvenile Halls. He stated that the department needs consistency across all facilities. He stated that there will be some functions that will remain centralized with the institutions being one of those.

Commissioner Safier asked where will the parents go to visit their kids with the video conferencing functions. Commissioner Safier asked if it will be a centralized location or will they Skype their children.

Chief Powers replied that his hopes are to have this function at each of the 35 Probation Offices in the County. He stated that upon full implementation, each of those county offices including Juvenile Hall and all of the Camps will have the technology set up there and the parents will go to the same Probation Office that they would go to if the child was out of custody and they had to report to the Probation Officer. He stated it would be a familiar location and easy process for them to come see their loved one.

Commissioner Cole asked what the numbers are for the money that goes out for Workman's Comp. Chief Powers replied that he is unsure but with 700 staff, he is sure it is probably a seven figure dollar amount.

Chairman Barcelona expressed his appreciation to Chief Powers and invited him to come back to speak to the EEC in the near future and the Commissioners applauded.

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