

2014 Candidate Questionnaire

Troy D. Berry

1. Do you intend to modify the promotional process from the current policy? If so, what would those changes be and why?

Currently, the promotional process with this agency consists of a test, resume and in-basket exercise. The current promotional process does not factor-in an officers' performance. In the past, performance evaluations were graded inconsistently from supervisor to supervisor. Performance should be evaluated even handedly across the agency. I am willing to work with the Agency Promotional Process Development Committee and the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) to develop a promotional process to address this issue.

It should be the goal of this agency to make all portions of the promotional process fair and equitable for all participants. During a promotional year, the sheriff should earmark funds to allow an accredited organization to grade and score tests, resumes and in-basket exercises of the promotional process. This would create openness and transparency to the promotional process. Once the promotional list is finalized, the sheriff should not deviate from the ranking order unless there is a pending disciplinary investigation.

2. Within the patrol division it is increasingly difficult to obtain approved leave. Officers are submitting leave requests for vacations up to a year in advance, however they are not being notified if their leave is approved or disapproved until, in some cases, a week prior. In addition to the late notification, their requested time is only being partially approved and the officers are being told to find someone to switch with. What specific plan or policy are you willing to adopt to mitigate this issue?

Manpower is the key issue concerning the difficulties with obtaining approved leave. Over the past several years, this administration has not supported the staffing levels of officers to supplement the patrol schedule.

As the sheriff, the patrol division needs to increase staffing in order to effectively fight crime, attend training and schedule approved leave. As the former District III Commander, I personally observed the officers' frustration with this unnecessary dilemma. Newly hired officers should be directed to the patrol division allowing manpower to increase in all four (4) district stations. Once manpower is enhanced, the patrol schedule will have flexibility to address approved leave and any unforeseen emergencies.

3. Directives, policy and procedures, and rules are being issued inconsistently and at times have become contradictory. Division Commanders have been issuing directives through emails which

may or may not be appropriately distributed to the entire agency. Other policy and manual changes are published through the POWER DMS system requiring officers to acknowledge receiving and reviewing them. What do you think is the most effective way or method to issue new directives in a manner which everyone will see it, understand it and having it available to research and locate at a later time?

When directives, policies, procedures and rules are issued inconsistently, the next level in the chain of command should resolve the inconsistency so that officers have clear understanding of protocol. For example, if the majors are inconsistent then the sheriff should resolve the inconsistency.

According to the manual, the procedures for dissemination and storage of agency written directives are the responsibility of the Deputy Director, Planning and Accreditation. The Deputy Director should be advised of the inconsistency and seek resolution. The individual changes and updates to the manual are posted on the Power DMS system for review and signature.

Directives, policies, procedures and rules being issued contradictory to the manual is disheartening and concerning. Based on this example, command staff should be referred to the manual for correction and/ or clarification of the directive.

As sheriff, I would assemble a committee from various aspects of this agency to conduct a complete review of the manual and SOP's assuring the information is accurate and current. In addition, I would be open to any suggestions from agency personnel on establishing a more effective method of issuing new directives.

4. Do you plan any re-organization of the agency and or command structure? If so, what changes would you make and why?

I would assess the skills, abilities and experience of all command level personnel. Changes would be made for the best interest of the agency and not for political reasons. Every member of the command staff should come up through the ranks (all the ranks) of this agency.

5. Can you explain the principal of "Chain of Command" and its importance in administrative and operational management and how does an "open door" police affect this?

The chain of command is the order in which authority and power in an organization is delegated from top level management to every employee at every level of the organization. The chain of command is vital to an administration and operational management flow chart, because the more defined the chain of command, the more effective the decision making process and greater the efficiency. The current open door policy undermines this effectiveness

creating a work environment of chaos, disfunction and strife. Also, this current open door policy allows employees to circumvent the chain of command and seek personal favors.

6. Explain the standards you will hold your command staff to?

First and foremost, the ethical and professional standards start with the sheriff. In my administration, the policies, rules and procedures would be evenly applied to everyone including the command staff. The command staff is the leadership of this organization and they should set a positive example for the individuals being lead. As sheriff, this will not be a “do as I say, and not as I do” organization.

7. In regards to the DROP program:

1. Would you ever deny an officer in good standing the ability to enter the DROP plan?
2. Would you ever remove or attempt to remove an officer in good standing who is in the DROP from the DROP before the officers five (5) year period is completed?

The Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) provides the officers with an alternative method of payment of their retirement benefits for a specified and limited period. This program allows the officers to financially transition into retirement more prepared and the police entity has an opportunity to strategically plan for the officers’ departure.

No, I would not deny nor delay an officer in good standing the ability to enter the DROP program. In addition, I would not remove or attempt to remove an officer in good standing from the DROP program during the five (5) year period.

8. What changes would you consider to improve or change existing policies with respect to recruiting, training, and deploying officers?

As sheriff, I will invest time and finances to retain current staff members and recruit qualified individuals based on merit. Training opportunities would be equally given to all staff members and I will deploy officers according to their talents and agency’s needs.

9. How would you differentiate yourself from your opponent?

Temperament and management style are the significant differences between Sheriff Coffey and me. During the course of my twenty-two (22) year career, I have worked diligently with all aspects of this agency and community to be an approachable and amicable person willing to work in any setting to resolve important issues. I don’t resent people who disagree with me, I don’t hold a grudge and I keep a professional demeanor under pressure.

I am not a micromanager! As sheriff, I will assemble a command staff that will earn the respect of the rank and file. Also, I will lead the command staff, directors and supervisors in managing the agency’s resources effectively. I will listen to the creative ideas of all staff

members and not just a selective few to manage the day-to-day operations of this organization.

10. If you decided to deviate from the ranking order of the promotional process results, what criteria would you base your decision on?

As sheriff, if you make this life changing decision to deviate or skip from the ranking order of the promotional list, this decision must be clear and transparent to the passed-over officer. The only exception justifying deviation from the top of the list should be a pending disciplinary investigation. This will eliminate political favoritism.

11. Officers in the Western side of the county (D-II area) have been working out of the Potomac Heights Volunteer Fire Department for over a year. What is your plan or intentions for a permanent D-II station?

Unfortunately, the officers working the western side of the county have been displaced for over a year. During the past 7 ½ years, I have observed this administration move at lightning speed regarding issues that promoted the Office of the Sheriff. The nearly thirty (30) officers have been forgotten and marginalized by this administration.

As sheriff, this issue will be a top priority! I will work rapidly with the County Commissioners to allocate and secure the necessary funding to give these officers a modern day work station.

12. In 2011 the position of Lieutenant Colonel was temporarily filled and has since remained vacant. Do you plan on filling this position and if so why?

Historically, the Lieutenant Colonel position has never been filled by previous administrations. In 2011, this administration temporarily filled the Lieutenant Colonel's position with an annual salary of \$140,000.00 knowing the Lieutenant Colonel was in the DROP program. This maneuver paved the way for a Major to be promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.

It is not a wise financial decision, it was a political decision, and it was and would be a waste of law enforcement dollars.

13. How would you maintain morale and motivation while leading the agency?

The staff members of the Charles County Sheriff's Office are its number one resource! Morale and motivation are core fundamentals of establishing a positive work environment. As sheriff, I would maintain morale and motivation by leading a positive example, being accessible to all facets of the agency, cultivating joint decisions through regular meetings, openly rewarding staff members for performance, managing fairly and equitably and encourage individuals to seek training to enhance job knowledge.

14. What has the agency gained with the addition of the master rank and what function does it serve?

According to the manual, the master rank is an appointed title bestowed by the Sheriff for a non-competitive position, where an officer meets the minimum years of service requirements and passes a nomination and review process. From my observation, the master rank has not been fairly and equitably administered to all deserving officers. This administration has used the master rank as a tool of division and not a rank open to the promotional process.

15. What is the principal of "micro-management" and what would you do to avoid this?

Micromanagement refers to a style of management of constantly looking over the employee's shoulders, and second guessing the employee's decision, suffocating the employee and creating a stressful work environment.

The dictionary state: a micromanager is motivated by fear and anxiety of receiving blame of "mistakes" on their watch. A micromanager will surround themselves with bureaucrats. The bureaucrats' relationship and loyalty is to the boss and not to their staff or peers.

As sheriff, I will solicit the creative talents of all staff members to move this agency in a positive direction. I will promote an atmosphere where individuals are encouraged to strive and reach their promotional potential and professional goals. Moreover, all staff members will be allowed to perform their jobs without the command staff or myself micromanaging their day-to-day activities.

16. As the Sheriff of Charles County can you describe what the relationship between the County Commissioners and the Sheriff should be?

Elected officials must always be mindful they are placed in office to conduct the business of the people. The citizens elected them to serve the community and not themselves.

As sheriff, I will work closely with the Charles County Commissioners on a professional manner to make this county a safe place live, work and visit. I am committed to putting the citizens and officers first over political party and personal relationships. I will secure the necessary funding, resources and staffing to make this organization a national model for law enforcement.

17. If you could go to the Legislature next year and enact one law to benefit law enforcement in Charles County, what would it be?

As sheriff, the Charles County Sheriff's Office will take a vital role during the legislature session introducing laws to benefit law enforcement in the State of Maryland.

I would encourage the Maryland Legislature to enact a law that exempts pensions earned by public safety employees from being taxed. It should be noted, this legislation to exempt pensions from being taxed has been discussed by both Republican and Democratic gubernatorial candidates.

18. What do you think the function and relationship of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) should be within your agency?

I agree with the preamble of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) contract. The Office of the Sheriff and FOP should work consistently to create a harmonious relationship to equitably and peacefully resolve work related concerns that are subject to collective bargaining under the governing law.

I have been a member of FOP Lodge #24 for over twenty (20) years and I have personally benefited from the improved working conditions negotiated by previous and current board members. As sheriff, I will pledge my continued respect and support to the FOP board and membership.

19. If a complaint is filed against you or a member of your command staff, whether anonymously or with a known complainant, will there be a formal investigation completed. Explain why or why not.

The command staff must have a firm commitment to do the right thing, at the right time and for the right reason. If a complaint is filed against anyone on the command staff including myself, a formal investigation will be conducted whether the complaint was received externally, internally or anonymously. Good leadership promotes accountability, fairness, transparency and professionalism among all staff members and the general public.