

SHERIFF RACE

Candidates Spotlight

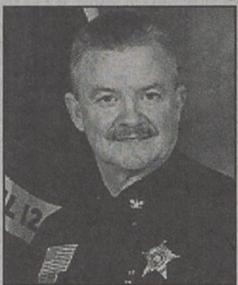
They speak. You decide.



DON ALLEN
Republican



MIKE CHAPMAN
Democrat



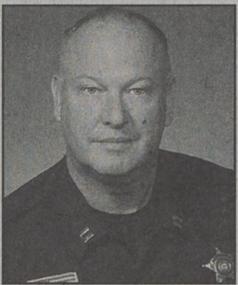
DANNY GORDON
Democrat



RAYMOND HAMRICK
D-Incumbent



DAVID MORROW
Republican



ALAN NORMAN
Democrat

The following questions, prepared by The Herald, were sent to all candidates in the race for Cleveland County Sheriff. All candidates responded in a timely manner. The questions and the candidates' response to each are listed below.

In an effort to remain fair and impartial, candidates are listed in alphabetical order by their last names. Except for a few minor grammatical changes, these are the words of your candidates—uncensored and unabridged.

Q1) Cleveland County is a big place. There have been complaints about slow response time in areas outside of Shelby. What do you propose to speed up response times?

Don Allen: There are several factors that effect response time. Some factors include officers availability, caller provided information, communications, road conditions, officer familiarization with the call location and travel routes. The urgency or priority of the call also effects response time. There have been some improvements but improved call response time will have to be a top priority for me as Sheriff. I will evaluate the factors effecting response time and do all I can to better service our citizens. I will lead our efforts to improve cooperation between law enforcement agencies, fire departments, EMS and our citizens. We will improve cooperation between agencies of the Region C Mutual Aid agreement, utilize existing satellite offices, establish new satellite offices, increase manpower in high call areas, improve communications, utilize community policing, put supervisors on patrol, eliminate unnecessary administrative duties for officers and whatever else we can do to put more officers on the road to better serve our citizens.

Mike Chapman: I intend to put and keep deputies out in the neighborhoods. This is the number one complaint that I have heard over the last eight months. Deputies will come to recognize what vehicles belong at which houses, etc. Response time is critical in any given situation.

Danny Gordon: Slow response times are unusual. Some problems associated with occasional slow response times are situations where there is an unusually high call volume and calls are prioritized by the nature of the call. An example would be an emergency call of a breaking and entering in progress would take precedence over a larceny that has already occurred. In-progress calls and other emergency calls will always be answered before reports of crimes that have already occurred and no suspects are on the scene.

Raymond Hamrick: Cleveland County is a big county with 644 sq. miles of coverage area. Our average response time in covering our county for law enforcement calls given a priority rating of 1 or less (which are the highest priority calls) is 9 minutes and 51 seconds for the past six months. For calls rated a priority of 2 or less (which are urgent but not requiring a 10-18 response) is 14 minutes and 45 seconds. Considering our call volume of 1,943 calls with a priority rating of 1 or less and 11,122 calls of a priority 2 or less in the past six months, and given the number of officers we have working per shift, which is nine if fully staffed, (and also taking into consideration that there is often someone out with sickness or taking leave time or out of county on a mental transport, etc.) the response time is really not that bad. We review any disputed call response times to see why there was a delay. We determine where the officer was when he/she received the call, weather conditions, driving conditions, the route taken, the priority given to the call by the dispatcher and we take into consideration what other deputies were doing at the time of the call and the priority and location of those calls. By doing this we can pretty well determine the reason for the delay and if we find a way that could have sped the call time up, then we advise the Deputies supervisor what we have determined so that they are aware how their response time could have been better. We do this on a case-by-case basis because the circumstances change with each call.

David Morrow: I plan to speed up response time by putting more deputies on the streets. I would add 1 deputy on each squad which would make response time much quicker. I will reassign officers and make changes in the administrative personnel so there will be no increase to the tax payers.

Alan Norman: Currently there are only nine men and women patrolling the county per shift. Rarely are there nine deputies working because you typically have someone taking vacation or holiday leave and sometimes you have an officer sick. I intend to re-evaluate the entire organization and put more deputies on the street to reduce response times.

law enforcement in a mutual-aid effort to provide faster service to those in need?

Don Allen: Yes, most definitely. We definitely need for all local law enforcement agencies to work together! Also, see answer to first question.

Mike Chapman: Anytime you can utilize other agencies to help in extreme circumstances, it's a win-win. No one agency can do it all, we're human. You automatically have more experience and more ideas to better handle the situation at hand.

Danny Gordon: Presently, and for many years in the past, we have had written mutual aid agreements with numerous area law enforcement agencies and jurisdictions which have proven to be beneficial and, of course, would be continued in my administration.

Raymond Hamrick: Yes, I would consider it, and from time to time we do call on local agencies for assistance. We have Mutual Aid Agreements in place with local law enforcement agencies in our county. We are conscientious not to abuse these agreements, realizing that each agency has their own calls to answer. And likewise we support the other agencies when they ask for our help.

David Morrow: Yes, I plan to establish an effective cooperation with all law enforcement agencies in Cleveland County and adjoining counties to stream line service to all the citizens of Cleveland County.

Alan Norman: I am a firm believer that law enforcement is a team effort. I would want a mutual aid agreement with all law enforcement agencies in the county. I would want to assist those agencies when we could and they assist the Sheriff's Office when they can.

Q3) What is the possibility of having a satellite office in the Kings Mountain area or in the north end of the county?

Don Allen: The Kings Mountain Police Department has always made space available for deputies to utilize but no sign is necessary there. Satellite offices are worthwhile only if they are utilized. I want the North end to have a satellite office and all the satellite offices need to be utilized to assist in keeping officers in their patrol areas.

Mike Chapman: A satellite office is a great idea for either area. I would look to the finance department, county commissioners, etc., to see if this is possible and if it is not then what do we have to do to make it possible? Minutes and travel time can make a difference.

Danny Gordon: We presently have a satellite office in the north end of the county in Lawndale. We have one in the west end of the county in Mooresboro. We also have one in Earl and Grover. If we were approached by officials from Kings Mountain about having a satellite office in the Kings Mountain area, we would certainly be receptive to making that happen.

Raymond Hamrick: We have a Satellite Office in Lawndale that is available to our Deputies working Northern Cleveland County and the Casar Fire Department allows our Deputies access to their station as needed. Our deputies have access to Kings Mountain Police Department and use their facility as needed. I really don't see a need for using another space than the Police Department because it has bathrooms, phones, and space available for an officer to talk to someone. That is really all we require.

David Morrow: There are already several satellite offices throughout the county. I will take that into consideration when making my decision. I will evaluate the situation and work with the leaders of the Kings Mountain area and the northern end of the county to assess the need for another satellite office.

Alan Norman: As I have traveled around the Kings Mountain area I have told people that I would like to have a satellite office in the City of Kings Mountain and have a schedule where every two weeks I would have office hours at that office and be available to the citizens of Kings Mountain. I would like to do this in as many areas of the county as possible.

Q4) What plans do you have to increase the number of patrolmen on the road?

Don Allen: I want to use more part-time and reserve officers to help put more manpower in the field. All our officers will be expected to respond to calls as first responders when on the road. If there are sworn personnel currently assigned to administrative duties that can be done by non-sworn personnel, I will make this change to put more sworn

personnel in the field. Supervisors will be expected to be active in the field. I will also eliminate unnecessary management and administrative assignments and combine duties where possible to have funds for additional officers. I will cut unnecessary budget items to reallocate funds for officer positions. All these things can be done to increase the number of officers available for calls but numbers alone is not the answer for poor service. I will demand excellence from all our personnel and expect our officers to provide our citizens the best service possible.

Mike Chapman: Recently, I witnessed nine CCSD patrol cars at a local restaurant. Wonder who was patrolling the county? I intend to put a stop to things just like this. If every officer is doing their job and is where they are supposed to be, we should have enough coverage. I need the citizens to speak out and contact me when things like this are going on.

Danny Gordon: It's certainly abundantly clear that Cleveland County's economy continues to be uncertain. For the past three years, it's been a challenge to scrutinize our county budget and find ways to reduce spending so that we could maintain our current work force, when nearby counties were not so fortunate and suffered reductions in personnel. Grant opportunities have already been explored but they had a required matching fund requirement. While it's easy to offer promises to add additional deputies on the road, realistically, the sheriff's office budget is approved by our local leaders. All funding and any additional positions must be approved by those officials. As our local leaders are working to find ways to keep our present work force intact, we will continue to explore avenues of funding to provide additional manpower. Every avenue is being explored, not only within the sheriff's department, but other county offices as well to avoid a reduction in force during our present state of economy.

Raymond Hamrick: I definitely would like to have an increase in the number of deputies on patrol, detectives, and Community Oriented Policing. However we were not allowed to ask for any additional personnel in this year's budget. Due to the expansion of the Detention Center Annex, which will require the hiring of 15 detention officers, and the economy of the county, we could not add Deputies this year. The County Commissioners must approve deputy positions. We were asked not to apply for grants, such as COPS grants, which require matching funds and eventually complete assumption by the county.

David Morrow: The current sheriff office is top heavy with administrative personnel. I will reduce the current 5 captains to 3 captains and use that savings to put more officers on the street, at no increase to the tax payers.

Alan Norman: I believe that the Sheriff's Office is currently top heavy with ranking officers. I plan to re-evaluate how the men and women are being used and put more officers on the street instead of in the office.

Q5) How do you feel about community-policing and it's role in fighting crime?

Don Allen: As Sheriff I will do all I can to get our citizens involved in helping our officers be able to serve them better. We will encourage positive citizen/officer communications. Our officers will be more available and visible. As your Sheriff I want our officers to know the people in their patrol areas. Our emphasis will be on service and improving the quality of live for all our citizens. Trust is the most important part of any community law enforcement effort. Crime is a community problem and people will help when they know they can trust their Sheriff. I will not have officers who do not understand their oath and are not trustworthy. I will set the example for all our officers by being active in community service and available to the people we serve.

Mike Chapman: Community policing is imperative. We need people to take back their neighborhoods and get involved. The more eyes and ears we have, the better we can do our job.

Danny Gordon: The department currently has a COP (Community Oriented Policing) which is a valuable resource for the community. I would continue this program and it has proven to be worthwhile. This particular group has been used to saturate high-crime areas for a police presence in those particular neighborhoods. They are also used during civic and community events where additional manpower is needed.

Raymond Hamrick: I believe in the concept of community oriented policing and I believe in it's value to the Sheriff's Office. Right now we have two COP Deputies working specifically in communities based on call volume and the nature of calls in their assigned areas. I would like for as many deputies as time and money will allow to be trained in Community Oriented Policing concepts so that they can apply what they learn here in our county.

David Morrow: I will implement community policing. People in an area will know the officer serving their area. The people will be able to trust their officer and the sheriff office as a whole. This will increase community involvement in solving crimes.

Alan Norman: I will also reestablish a community oriented policing mentality where my officers know the people in the communities and the people know them. Fighting crime takes team work and I want the community involved.

Q6) How do you feel about the Citizen's Academy? Would you consider continuing the program?

Don Allen: The Shelby Police Department first started

See SHERIFF, 3B

Q2) Would you consider calling on other local

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