

Kenosha County Sheriff Questionnaire 2018

The first step in seeking the support of Forward Kenosha is filling out this candidate questionnaire. We will follow up with you to confirm receipt of the questionnaire.

If you'd like to preview the full list of questions before getting started, just print this page. You'll get a full copy of the questions that you'll find on all the pages of this questionnaire.

Thank you for doing your part in giving the power back to the people. We're glad you're part of this movement

Email address *

Zoernerd@gtc.edu

Candidates Name *

David Zoerner

How many years have you lived in your state or district? *

44 years

Are you a current or former elected official? If yes, what office(s)? *

No

Why are you running for office (27 words or less)? *

I am driven to build the Kenosha County Sheriff's Office into a dynamic, ultra-professional police organization that is representative of our community.

Opioids

What could be done differently to address the opioid crisis in Kenosha County? *

When asking what can be done differently, we have to determine what is already being done. We need to centralize what services we are already providing through social services, school systems, health department, emergency room and even our own medical examiners office has gathered a large amount of data.

The opioid crisis has brought many grant opportunities and so many different parts of our community are utilizing them. We need to extrapolate what is the most effective and not duplicate efforts. The opioid task force already exists. With all partners centralized at the same table, we will realize success more rapidly. There is a great deal of excellent work being done, we need to identify that and make sure all partners have the same tools. All agencies have a different mission, but our goal is the same. We want to protect and save lives. Law Enforcement is a small piece of a very large epidemic. The law enforcement community is evolving, but this epidemic requires cooperation and collaboration. Currently the Division of Aging and Disabilities, District Attorney's Office and the Health Department have implemented a program to work with first time offenders, the pre-charge program. This program utilizes MAT, Medically Assisted Treatment, specifically Vivitrol. This is a good example of how several facets of our community have come together to combat this epidemic.

The next step is prevention. That work starts at home and in school.

Do you believe drug users have a disease or a character flaw? *

There are many reasons why people use drugs. I have worked with families in which many members are using and I have worked with families that are shocked to learn that one member is using. Whether or not a drug user is addicted, considered flawed or having a disease isn't a matter I would typically pass judgment on. Perhaps one lends itself to the other. This problem is extremely complex, which is why it takes so many agencies and such an immense effort to see progress.

Comments on any of your responses for this section

I have had a long career in law enforcement. I have to be objective in all facets of my career. I don't pre-judge and I do not discriminate. Every situation has it's on merits or flaws.

Community Relations

The Sheriff's department covers a wide area. What do you feel are the similarities/differences throughout the various communities in the county?

*

Kenosha County is vast and does have differences and similarities among its communities such as socio-economic, rural and urban settings. The urban families in sub-divisions feel a sense of community with church and schools, perhaps private sector presence of shopping centers and recreational areas. The multi-generational dairy farmer in Brighton or Paris also has a strong sense of community. The socio-economic variation can at times be extreme. As the school resource officer of Wilmot High School, I frequently worked with students that did without. At times, did without a winter coat. Poverty within this city schools is profound at times as well. At a time of low unemployment and thriving industry, there are still hungry children in all of our own backyards.

How would you improve the relationship between the sheriff's department and the community if elected? *

We need to solicit the involvement of community organizations such as CUSH, NAACP, Hope Council, Boys and Girls Club and faith based organizations to build collaborative, sustainable relationships between law enforcement and our community. I want all of these organizations assistance with policy review and training protocols.

As I teach all of my criminal justice classes, law enforcement agencies should be representative of the community that they serve.

How would you make the department more open to feedback? *

Everyone and every community needs to be a welcome part of a collaborative effort if it is to be effective and sincere. I will promote a dialogue with community leaders and facilitate a relationship that welcomes input, both positive and negative.

Will your department have an ongoing dialogue with the African-American community on these issues? *

Yes

No

Have you met with community organizers on ways to confront these issues candidly and directly? *

Yes

No

If you have not met with community organizers, please tell us why.

Comments on any of your responses for this section

Racism

How will you prevent racial profiling? *

The first obvious step to preventing racial profiling is to enforce a zero tolerance policy. Racial profiling is racial discrimination and will not be tolerated on any level. There is advanced training available and can be implemented as part of a mandatory, ongoing sensitivity training protocol for officers.

Have you or a colleague ever acted or spoken disrespectfully toward a minority group? *

Yes

No

Have you ever posted on social media disrespectfully to/about a minority group? *

Yes

No

Do you think there are racial disparities in how law enforcement uses force? *

Yes

No

Please elaborate on your answer to the above question. *

As a career law enforcer I would be remiss if I didn't recognize this as an issue of concern. As a law enforcement trainer, I train officers extensively about the use of force and the existence of racial bias. Nationally, the statistics surrounding racial disparity in law enforcement use of force are alarming.

Do you believe victims of law enforcement violence have rights? *

Yes

No

Please elaborate on the above answer *

Absolutely. Every person and every victim has rights. If a person is victimized by a law enforcement officer, that victim deserves to be heard. The authority granted to police officers by the law comes with immense responsibility. If that public trust is broken the officer needs to be held accountable.

Many law enforcement departments suffer from a locker-room culture of racism. Will you have a policy when an officer regularly uses racial slurs, such as race sensitivity training? *

Yes

No

Will you take measures to keep track of what percentage of the citations issued by your department have gone to low income citizens and/or people of color? *

Yes

No

Please elaborate on the above answer *

I am an advocate of tracking data. I will monitor the activity of deputies and verify our performance is appropriate, professional and respectful.

Comments on any of your responses for this section

In my response to the second question, I was not including the current Sheriff. His public comments are his own.

Department Function/Training

Do you feel the current screening process is adequate? *

Yes

No

Please describe how the screening process is or is not adequate. *

The current screening process does an adequate job at determining a candidates qualifications. If a new deputy has to attend the certifying police academy, there are several more months of opportunity to observe them in stressful situations and working within their peer group. Beyond that, there is a year long field training protocol. The current screening process may not seem that comprehensive, however it is more that a year long process before an officer is sent our on their own to patrol.

Do you feel the current training/in-service provided is adequate? *

Yes

No

Do you feel the current ongoing department training is adequate? *

Yes

No

Please describe how the training, in-service or ongoing, is or is not adequate.

*

Annual required time is 24 hours of in-service training. That time would typically be filled with a driving course, CPR or other police issues that might be in the news at the time. This is not enough time to cross train disciplines, go deep enough into the topics or run scenarios based training..

Do you feel the department is adequately trained in de-escalation techniques? *

Yes

No

Please describe what, if anything, you would change in the current training. *

As a Hostage/Crisis Negotiator I have the opportunity for advanced de-escalation training. I am an advocate of cross training disciplines. All state certified police officers have the same training. It is the advanced certifications and specialized training that I want the officers to cross train in. If deputies train periodically de-escalation techniques with hostage negotiators, everyone will improve.

Both the Kenosha County Jail and the Detention Center have a history of staffing shortages. Please elaborate on how you would handle the current staffing issues. *

The first thing I would do is ask our current detentions staff what suggestions they have. We have an exceptional detentions staff that is under appreciated. We need to do a much better job recruiting. We need to recruit at our colleges and even high schools. We should utilize our exceptional staff as ambassadors of the department. While emphasizing the importance of public safety, we need to market the stability of working for a county government. The next step is to ask our community leaders to assist us in our search to develop our staff. If the NAACP, LULAC or any other community organization was able to assist with a recruitment, that would not only assist in staffing but also as a exercise in building community trust.

Please describe your position on body cameras and if law enforcement should/should not wear them. *

Body cameras are an absolute must for all law enforcement agencies. All police officers should wear a body camera while acting in a law enforcement capacity.

If you feel body cameras are necessary, how would you ensure compliance, and how would you ensure cameras are in working order for all law enforcement? *

The new body camera systems that I prefer, work in conjunction with our squad cars computer system. While the body camera is recording, the data begins uploading to the mainframe computer system, eliminating any opportunity for malfeasance or accidental data loss.

What is your position on the use of snowmobiles/bicycles? Please describe whether or not their use would be helpful. *

Bicycle patrol has been very useful in county parks during the summer months. The snowmobile unit has a limited role, however it is very important to have them if there is an emergency on a snowmobile trail in the woods or on the far side of a rural farm.

Comments on any of your responses for this section:

Law enforcement is a stressful occupation. How would you ensure all officers have access to regular mental health/wellness assessments? *

Law enforcement calls for service are frequently stressful and leave officers depressed and at risk for additional problems. I encourage "debriefs" for less serious calls for service. It is important to understand that it isn't just the most violent or serious calls that effect officers. Many times officers can begin to develop symptoms of PTSD from repeated less serious instances.

Although there is a program in place for officers to seek counseling if they feel that they need assistance, most do not as they do not want to appear weak or hurt their prospects for promotions. This is a an inappropriate and outdated mindset. I will develop a protocol to ensure the anonymity of the officer, and ensure their privacy. As I already do as supervisor, I will develop and foster a culture of mutual respect and dignity.

An officer observes questionable behavior in a colleague. What is the protocol for a scenario such as this? *

When an officer observes questionable behavior in a colleague, they should report it to their supervisor or the next person in their chain of command.

How would you ensure there are measures to handle the above scenario safely? *

The chain of command is in our policy and needs to be adhered to. An investigation would be conducted and appropriate action taken, whether discipline or otherwise.

What measures would you take to prevent such behaviors as described above? *

Having a clear policy and standard for officers behavior and conduct and enforcing that policy consistently.

Will you hold officers accountable who abuse their power the first time and not wait until there are several complaints against them? (Leave with pay should not be an option) *

Yes

No

Immigration/ICE

Section 287(g) of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act authorizes the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to deputize selected state and local law enforcement officers to enforce federal immigration law. What is your position on Section 287(g)? Would you enact 287(g) in our community? *

My position on 287(g) is that this program may be misleading to Sheriff's and not in the best interest of the sheriff's department or the county. All of the expenses aren't covered and ICE does not take any liability for the counties enforcement action. Furthermore, I do not believe it is our mission to enforce immigration statutes. In addition, in an already fractured and tenuous national and local climate, this is not a program I would participate in.

If elected sheriff, will the Sheriff's Office enforce ICE hold request under any circumstances? *

Yes

No

If elected sheriff, will you share any of the following information with ICE by any means: a. Criminal custody release dates b. Home address or other contact information c. Physical description d. Court dates (Please indicate which in your answer) *

Yes, violent felons. I have no intention of conducting ICE raids or making arrests for ICE nor participating in the 287(g) program. I cannot ignore my duty or responsibility to the citizens of Kenosha County, however.

Comments on any of your responses in this section:

Incarceration/Rehabilitation

Should inmates be provided with educational and recreational opportunities? *

Yes

No

Please elaborate on your answer to the above question. *

The Kenosha County Sheriff's Department contracts with the Kenosha Unified School District to have licensed teachers teach inmates in a GED completion program. The self-esteem boost as well as the increased prospects for the inmates are immense. I support inmates having recreational opportunities, as it helps them stay calm in a stressful detentions setting and keeps their minds busy.

Do you believe in rehabilitation?

Yes

No

Please elaborate on your answer to the above question. *

It has been my experience that an inmate that has committed themselves to accomplishing something and participates in programming, whether it's Living Free AODA program or Batter's Treatment program, they are affected and better for having participated in the programming.

Is Kenosha doing a good job rehabilitating incarcerated people? *

Yes

No

Please elaborate on your answer to the above question. *

I believe that Kenosha does do a good job trying to assist incarcerated people in a journey for rehabilitation. On the other hand, I process the paperwork to send several people to state prison every week. So many are going back for 2nd and 3rd time that can be discouraging.

What improvements can be made to lower the rate of recidivism? *

We can do better by collaborating with our community partners and ensuring that our recently released inmates have positive examples in their lives and the opportunity for gainful employment by assisting them in job searches and finding job training.

What is your stand on collaborating with community agencies on discharge coordination of inmates returning to the community? *

This is a tremendous issue currently. I have spoken with community leaders to discuss this. I am completely in favor of collaboration with community agencies to coordinate an appropriate discharge of inmates back into the community. We need to do better considering the needs of the individual as well as the protection of the community. Releasing a homeless inmate in the middle of the night is not a good situation for the homeless person or the community.

Comments to any of your responses for this section:

Gun Control/Gun Violence

What is your position on common sense gun control? Please state your support by checking yes or no to each of the following:

Ban assault rifles *

Yes

No

Increase the age to buy (not necessarily use) firearms to 21 years. *

Yes

No

Eliminate high capacity magazines to no more than six rounds (Hunters are limited to five shots for a kill). *

Yes

No

Limit gun purchases to one per month. *

Yes

No

Licensing and registering firearms, the same way we license drivers and hunters. *

Yes

No

Background checks and limitations on ammunition *

Yes

No

Limitation of firearm ownership for substance abusers *

Yes

No

National data base for guns *

Yes

No

3-day waiting period for gun ownership *

Yes

No

Closing gun show loopholes

Yes

No

If you responded NO to any of the above, please explain

- A ban on semi-automatic rifles is not a ban on assault rifles. Fully automatic rifles require a Class 3 Tax Stamp which take nearly a year to obtain. I am not a proponent of banning semi-automatic rifles.
 - The high capacity magazine restriction really isn't that important for me to oppose, but we did have a 10 round magazine restriction once, which didn't effectively change anything.
 - I have no problem with registering guns, however the term "licensing" seems ambiguous.
 - Conducting a \$10 background check on a \$15 box of ammunition seems excessive to me.
 - I am not in favor of a national database of any kind. If you legally purchase a new firearm, it will be registered with the ATF. I don't think a second record is necessary.
 - I am surprised there ins't a reference to mental health in the list of questions. I am a proponent of new legislation allowing competent persons to petition the court to temporarily ban a person suffering from a mental health issue from possessing firearms, in extraordinary circumstances.
-

High Speed Law Enforcement Chases

Do you agree with the department's written policy on high speed chases?

Yes

No

If not, how would you change it?

Comments on any of your responses for this section:

We as a department can chase. The supervisor on duty will monitor the chase and call it off if he/she feels that the circumstances of the chase are dangerous, such as a populated area or traffic concerns.

It has become more common for deputies to call off or discontinue their own chases.

Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment

Are you familiar with the sheriffs departments' policy on sexual harassment among employees? *

Yes

No

Do you feel the policy noted above is adequate? *

Yes

No

If you answered NO to the above question, how would you change it?

Are you familiar with the sheriffs departments' policy on sexual harassment of detainees? *

Yes

No

Do you feel the policy noted above is adequate? *

Yes

No

If you answered NO to the above question, how would you change the policy?

.....

Personal Fitness of Law Enforcement

What makes you the best candidate for the job? *

I have a 19 year record of collaborative relationships with the entire Kenosha County law enforcement community. I work well with all of our law enforcement colleagues and am a trusted supervisor know for my fair and inclusive management style.

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What do you think is the most important skill of being a good sheriff? *

The most important skill of being a good sheriff is the ability to communicate. Communicate with the command staff, communicate with county board, communicate with the community and communicate with the deputies.

What is the biggest need of the sheriff's department now, and what will you do to fulfill that need? *

The sheriff's department is currently suffering from a personnel shortage. Our jail staff is in crucial need of relief and the low unemployment only exacerbates the situation. I will begin an aggressive recruiting effort at the colleges and high schools, promoting the stability of working for a county government and the all inclusive team that we are building.

Assessing the recent performance of the sheriff's department and if elected, would you keep going in the same direction or change course? *

If elected to sheriff, I will make a complete departure from the current administrations divisive rhetoric and begin building a dynamic, inclusive, ultra-professional law enforcement agency that our community will be proud of.

Last Step

Click "Submit" below to send your completed questionnaire to the Endorsement Team of Forward Kenosha.

If you have any questions about the status of your questionnaire, follow up with Forward Kenosha's Endorsement Team by emailing forwardkenosha@gmail.com

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