

**SOUTH BAY CITIES COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2020  
HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Valentine called the Special Meeting of the SBCCOG Board of Directors to order at 6:05pm.

**II. ATTENDANCE****In attendance were the following voting elected officials:**

Cedric Hicks, Carson	Hildy Stern, Manhattan Beach
Chris Pimentel, El Segundo	Kenny Kao, Palos Verdes Estates
Rodney Tanaka, Gardena	Christian Horvath, Redondo Beach
Olivia Valentine, Hawthorne	George Chen, Torrance
James Butts, Inglewood	Jennifer LaMarque, SD-4
Jim Gazeley, Lomita	

**The following non-voting elected officials were in attendance:**

Mark Henderson, Gardena

**Also, in attendance were the following persons:**

Scott Mitnick, El Segundo	Kim Turner, Torrance
Bill Whalen, El Segundo	James Lee, Torrance
Erick Lee, Hawthorne	Sarah Patterson, SCAG
Michael Ishii, Hawthorne	Jacki Bacharach, SBCCOG
Michael Reyes, Lawndale	David Leger, SBCCOG
Jacob Haik, LA CD-15	Natalie Champion, SBCCOG
Aksel Palacios, LA CD-15	Grace Farwell, SBCCOG
Laura Guglielmo, Palos Verdes Estates	Laurie Jacobs, SBCCOG
Aram Chaparyan, Torrance	Kevin McCarthy, Public

**III. CONFIRM POSTING OF THE AGENDA BY THE CITY OF TORRANCE**

The agenda was properly posted in the City of Torrance.

Ms. Bacharach announced that there is a change to the agenda. Board Member Buscaino was called to another meeting and will not be participating in tonight's discussion.

**IV. BOARD DISCUSSION WITH PRESENTER MAYOR JAMES T. BUTTS**

Mayor Butts began his presentation by sharing a brief overview of his life experience so far and how he can understand many of the policing issues from both sides. He explained that he started his career in law enforcement in 1972 and went on to lead three different police departments as Police Chief. Mayor Butts also noted that Inglewood was a stronghold of the Ku Klux Klan until the 1930's with racial covenants until the 1960's. He joined the Inglewood Police Department around the time of "white flight". In his youth, he was pulled over and almost arrested for attempted murder because he was driving a car that looked similar to one the police were looking for. If it was not for his police cadet hat sitting on the passenger seat, he felt that he likely would have not been let go. All of these experiences have provided him a unique point of view that he hopes to share with the Board of Directors.

During his discussion, Mayor Butts touched on the following main topics:

- **Discretion:** Police officers and all legal entities have immense discretionary power that must be used more frequently. Mayor Butts explained that an officer's discretion to not write somebody a ticket or the way a report is written could have enormous ripple effects in an individual's life. Individuals living paycheck to paycheck often don't have the funds to pay for traffic tickets and by using their discretion, an officer could be relieving that person from making decisions on whether to put food on the table or pay the ticket. The way a report is written could dramatically impact future judicial actions. The same discretionary power also exists in the judicial system alongside the same implicit biases that police officers are trained about. Mayor Butts explained that discretion could improve police-community relations by re-building the "guardian" view

of police as opposed to furthering the “us vs. them” that exists in many areas, particularly minority communities.

- **Mentality.** Mayor Butts emphasized his view that police departments must do more to move their officers away from being in a “warrior” type of mindset and to shift to a “community guardian” mindset. He explained that police officers are trained to be ready for danger at every given moment which has led to many of the incidents that have caused recent civil unrest. Some are quick to assume a situation is dangerous and respond with deadly force. He explained that shifting this mentality will help repair relationships with communities. New officers are very “pliable” and easily pick up the values and culture of their department. If they join a department that prides itself on being values based and progressive, the officer picks up on those cues and brings them into the community with them.
- **Accountability and Asking Question.** One of the main points of Mayor Butts’ presentation was that city councils must hold their Police Chiefs accountable. Police Department culture is changed from inside and from the top. As Chief of Santa Monica Police Department, Mayor Butts led numerous changes to the department and worked to infuse the mission, vision, and values of the agency into every single officer. Crime dropped 64% during his tenure as Chief and the city went from \$3.5M in settlements/year to less than \$1,000 when he left.

Mayor Butts urged councilmembers to sit down to talk with their Police Chiefs and ask questions about things such as ticketing; excessive force complaints; who in the department can dispose of complaints. Mayor Butts noted that if a complaint is handled with a response such as “I’ll talk to the officer” and is never officially filed, that is a bad sign as that’s a sign of a department seeking to protect itself. An accountable Chief is also willing to upset the police officers’ union in Mayor Butts’ eyes. Often times, reform efforts are met with statements like “you’re going to piss off the guys” by police union representatives. Mayor Butts explained that the Chief must be willing to piss them off because at the end of the day, they are responsible for the department and are the person that gets called at 2am when an officer shoots somebody. He noted that he experienced this in Santa Monica and explained that as long as he was Chief, the officers would be doing things his way.

Questions should be posed about what training the department uses; does its mission encourage appreciation for human lives and values how individuals are treated?; What metrics are used in promotions?; and ask for information on incidents where the city paid money for misconduct as the Council is entitled to see and read those files. Mayor Butts noted that when these types of questions are asked, the Chief will understand that the Council cares and is watching what happens.

Mayor Butts also shared two videos of police interactions to highlight the dichotomous examples of police department cultures.

- **Phoenix, Arizona Video.** This video showed a recent police interaction with a Black family that made headlines for over-response by the Phoenix Police Department. Mayor Butts noted that this is one of many similar incidents and is a sign of bad police culture. The video is available here: <https://youtu.be/Rxwznb3U010>
- **Portland, Oregon Video.** The portions of this video shared by Mayor Butts highlighted the positive experiences of officers with the Portland Police Department in context of the recent riots. A Black officer shared that the Department and its officers have always been accepting and kind, noting that he has never experienced any racism within the Department. A female officer shared her experience working as part of a team to build relationships with neighbors, businesses, victims, and colleagues. The video is available here: [https://youtu.be/wMe2hou\\_sgE](https://youtu.be/wMe2hou_sgE)

### Questions from the Board of Directors

- Board Member Stern shared some recent police interactions in Manhattan Beach with Mayor Butts and asked for his opinions on the situations. The Mayor explained that each incident is unique and without seeing the reports and incident videos, it’s difficult to say exactly. However, he shared that she and the Council should not hesitate to ask questions of the Chief. He noted that he looked forward to meeting with his Councilmembers as Chief because it gave him an opportunity to show how well the police department was operating. Board Member Stern’s questions and Mayor Butts’ responses are available in the meeting video in their entirety.

- **What is your expectation of the police officers in use of force situations?** Mayor Butts answered that only enough force to overcome the resistance should be used. Officers are not there to punish individuals or teach them a lesson. He added that every department should know that ALL officers have the responsibility to say “enough” when a situation is over and to prevent fellow officers from getting carried away with the rush of adrenaline. The George Floyd incident is likely to start a change in this regard according to Mayor Butts.
- **For a department in transition, are there trainings available to help change officer attitudes?** Mayor Butts explained that no training program or educational course will ever be a panacea. He reiterated his point that a responsive Chief will be the biggest change for a department. He explained that as Chief of Santa Monica’s Police Department, he interviewed every single officer prior to them being hired.
- **What does “reimagining police, police reform, and defund the police” mean to you?** Mayor Butts did not hesitate to share his opposition to these concepts and his view that people using these terms are only showing they have no idea what they are talking about. “Reorganizing” or “retooling” is what you are looking to do.
- **Do you support augmenting police departments with social service workers?** Mayor Butts was strongly in favor of this concept and pointed to his deployment of a homeless liaison program in Santa Monica. However, he added that every officer should be trained to exhibit compassion and has the responsibility to take into account the individual’s situation/mental health issues and to never escalate a situation.
- **What can those cities that contract with LA County Sheriff’s Department do?** Mayor Butts noted that this is more difficult as the Sheriff’s Department is an independent agency, not controlled by a City Council. He noted that Sheriff Station Captains often have little sway over deputies compared to how a Chief oversees their Department’s deputies. For decades, LASD has been plagued with cliques/gangs of officers within stations and unfortunately there has been little done to really address the problem until after these gangs come to light.
- **What do you think is the root cause of the issues we’re seeing?** If we can’t identify and respond to the root cause, we simply continue addressing symptoms of that deep-seated issue. Mayor Butts responded by briefly highlighting the experiences of Black people in the United States. The foundation of the United States economy and its history was built off of slavery, genocide of Natives, and the idea that “might makes right”. For hundreds of years Black Americans picked the cotton on Southern plantations that fueled the textile industries of the North, enriching the white industry and landowners, all while Black people were considered 3/5 of a person by the US government. Upon the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the freeing of enslaved Black Americans, police and sheriff departments popped up throughout the country to enforce the status quo. Successful Black communities such as Tulsa, Oklahoma were burnt down to the ground by angry white residents and were run out of town in the early 1900’s. This was followed by Black people not being allowed to vote, which was followed by lack of educational opportunities and the War on Drugs. Arbitrary enforcement of laws and the use of force on certain individuals is what we’ve been seeing most recently. Mayor Butts explained that the generations of inequality have broken the social contract between Black people and the government. The social contract is an implicit agreement among members of the society to cooperate for social benefits, particularly equality in the eyes of the law in the United States. Mayor Butts shared that in his view, until that history is addressed, passing laws to respond to the issue before us today will accomplish little.

For more detail, the full meeting has been uploaded and is available for viewing here: <https://youtu.be/Qxs2CDai7zY>

#### **XI. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

No public comment was received.

#### **XII. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Valentine adjourned the meeting at 7:58 pm to Thursday, August 27, 2020 at 6:00 pm. The meeting will be held virtually via Zoom until further notice.

David Leger  
Assistant Board Secretary