COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 4/28/2026

File #: 26-293

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisor Steve Madrone

Agenda Section: Initiated by Board Member

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Consider the Establishment of an Independent Civilian-Led Oversight System for the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Consider directing staff to return to the Board with an ordinance which establishes an independent civilian-led oversight system for the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office; and
2. Provide other direction, as appropriate.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

The recommended actions support the following areas of the Board of Supervisors' Strategic Plan:

Area of Focus: Safe & Healthy Communities
Strategic Plan Category: 1001 -Support and sustain partnerships between public safety and partner agencies to enhance public safety in our communities

DISCUSSION:

The Board of Supervisors has been asked to investigate the creation of an independent civilian-led oversight system for the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office to improve transparency, accountability and public trust. The proposed oversight system would create a Sheriff's Policy and Practice Board and an Inspector General, which will operate independently, but report to the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors.

The Sheriff's Policy and Practice Board would be made up of seven (7) to nine (9) community members appointed by the Board of Supervisors as an independent civilian oversight body. Their main responsibilities would include, without limitation: reviewing misconduct complaints and major incidents, including, but not limited to, officer-involved shootings and in-custody deaths, inspecting jails and evaluating conditions, reviewing the budget and spending of the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office, recommending policy, training and procedural changes, holding public meetings and publishing annual reports.

The Inspector General would be an independent official appointed by the Board of Supervisors whose primary role would be to audit and review internal investigations and complaints. The duties of the Inspector General would include, without limitation; reviewing use-of-force cases, officer-involved shootings and misconduct investigations, evaluating whether investigations are thorough and fair, accessing investigation files and evidence, recommending further investigation or policy changes, monitoring compliance with Board

recommendations, responding to critical incidents and potentially conducting independent investigations, if needed.

Both the Sheriff's Policy and Practice Board and the Inspector General will have the ability to: issue subpoenas, access records, body camera footage and internal investigations and require that the Sheriff's Office cooperate with lawful requests in accordance with any and all applicable local, state and federal laws, regulations, policies, procedures and standards.

Both the Sheriff's Policy and Practice Board and the Inspector General would provide the Board of Supervisors with an annual public report on use of force, complaints, jail conditions and in-custody deaths.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:
General Fund

FINANCIAL IMPACT:
Considering the establishment of an independent civilian-led oversight system for the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office has no direct costs and will not impact the Humboldt County General Fund. However, if established, the oversight system would require additional staff time and associated costs.

STAFFING IMPACT:
The recommended actions will not affect current staff levels. However, if an independent civilian-led oversight system is established, it is anticipated that staff could take on additional work to support the oversight body.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:
None

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:
Board discretion.

ATTACHMENTS:
1. Sample Ordinance

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:
Meeting of: July 23, 2024 and Oct. 29, 2024
File No.: 24-1094 and 24-1488