

**LEAN Duluth - St. Louis County Sheriff Questionnaire**  
**2022 Primary Election**  
**August 5th, 2022**



Dear Duluth Community,

The upcoming election includes an important race for criminal justice organizers. After 20 years and five terms, St. Louis County Sheriff Ross Litman is retiring. The three candidates running to replace him are Jason Lukovsky, Gordon Ramsay, and Chad Walsh.

The primary election is Tuesday, August 9th. Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. [More information on voting](#) is available on the City of Duluth website. Two candidates will advance from the primary to the general election on November 8th.

LEAN Duluth reached out to each of the candidates with a brief questionnaire about their views and experience on issues related to police accountability. At this time, we are publishing the candidates' written answers unedited and without commentary below. However, we plan to provide additional investigation and analysis prior to the general election in November.

It is extremely important that the LEAN community learns about the candidates and votes in the Tuesday primary. Local elections are where our voices are the strongest, and the sheriff race in particular will select an individual who will have access and responsibility over systems and personnel that directly impact our neighbors and family members here in Duluth. Without a term limit, this individual has the potential to make decisions that will either support or oppose accountability initiatives for the foreseeable future.

We look forward to seeing all of you at the polls.

The Law Enforcement Accountability Network

## **2022 Candidates:**

**Jason Lukovsky**

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**Website:** <https://lukovskyforsheriff.com/>

***Tell us about yourself – your background, experience, and why you are running for Sheriff.***

I am a lifelong St. Louis County resident, currently living in Fredenberg township with my wife of 24 years Tami, a long time public school teacher. We have a 15 year old son and a 13 year old daughter. I have worked for the Sheriff's Office for 24 years. I am currently the county's Undersheriff, meaning second in command. During my tenure, I have achieved every promotable rank within our organization. I am running for the office of Sheriff because I have dedicated myself to this organization throughout my law enforcement career. Having worked, or supervised, in every division of the Sheriff's office, I understand the statutory responsibilities this position requires. As the current Undersheriff, I have successfully been serving in many of the roles that I would hold as Sheriff. I have had tremendous support and encouragement from staff and feel the citizens of St. Louis County are deserving of a qualified candidate.

***What are your views on racial disparity in policing, particularly in St. Louis County? How have you worked to address racial disparities in your previous positions? How would you do so as St. Louis County Sheriff?***

Racial disparity is something I am cognizant of and not afraid to have conversations about. St. Louis County is diverse and citizens have differing opinions, depending on the jurisdiction in which they live. Until my appointment to Undersheriff, my role(s) in addressing racial disparities consisted of ensuring that there was an awareness, by our staff, that perceptions of disparity exist and how to best treat, or interact with the people we serve. As Sheriff, I will continue our educational efforts for staff so they better recognize their potential biases and are understanding of the need for a more inclusive approach. Humility and compassion will be commitments I will require of our staff.

***Are you familiar with the organizations working towards police accountability in the Twin Ports? What is your relationship with them?***

I am familiar with the Duluth Community Safety Initiative, L.E.A.N Duluth and the NAACP. I would say that my relationship has been active behind the scenes as my responsibilities within my organization have changed. I consider myself to be informed and open-minded about the concerns of these and other organizations. During my career, I feel strongly that I have demonstrated a willingness to engage in conversations that allow for an equitable approach to public safety concerns, for all citizens of St. Louis County.

***What are your views on Duluth's new Crisis Response Team? Are you familiar with the CAHOOTS model? What role do you think law enforcement should play in social issues such as mental health, housing, and drug use?***

For over 5 years, I was the Supervising Deputy of the 911 Communications Center and participated in efforts to improve alternative response measures. I am familiar with the CAHOOTS model. The city of Duluth's original roll out of this initiative was not as successful as it is now. Since the inception, there has been more of a focus on a collaborative approach to long-term solutions which depends heavily on community partnerships. We are now seeing greater results. I am fully supportive of community crisis response or crisis response team options. Law enforcement needs to be a partner in dealing with mental health related crisis calls for service but often we are not needed or only escalate a situation. Equally important, has been the creation of crisis response in our Northern communities.

***Is there anything else you would like to share with us?***

Thank you, I appreciate this opportunity.

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**Gordon Ramsay**

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**Website:** <https://voteramsay.com/>

***Tell us about yourself – your background, experience, and why you are running for Sheriff.***

I grew up in Duluth, have been in policing since age 20 and have a Master's Degree. I've been married for 25 years & have two children ages 12 and 15. I love working on issues of policing around community relations - a hallmark of my career. I have been in police leadership for over 23 years and am running for Sheriff because I am passionate about the role of police in society. I am concerned about the direction of public safety in our county & want to ensure we are focused on building strong relationships with those we serve because that is how we lower crime, get things done and help people feel safe. Over my career I have led the way to decouple police from mental health calls, helped successfully reduce disparities in juvenile incarceration, improved transparency in policing & strengthened police relationships with those who have historically not had trust. Additionally, having almost 30 years of experience, I have assisted or overseen hundreds of homicides, many kidnappings, shootings & other serious crimes. When something bad happens to someone you know, you want a leader who has the most experience. Last year alone I had four officers shot on duty and an in-line of duty death. Real experience is critical.

***What are your views on racial disparity in policing, particularly in St. Louis County? How have you worked to address racial disparities in your previous positions? How would you do so as St. Louis County Sheriff?***

Building good relationships with everyone in our community is important to me and work remains in addressing racial disparities in our county. I have been at the table working on this issue during my career. I want to be part of the solution and have a passion for this work. I have been a leader in reducing juvenile detention disparities, data collection and systems changes in a good faith effort to make a positive difference. In partnership with the community we built two civilian review boards, collected more data, shared it, and worked with community groups on warrant amnesty days, partnered with groups to help get people's drivers licenses reinstated & hired the most diverse police officers in the history of two police departments. Additionally, we created a Spanish speaking citizen police academy, a liaison position with various racial and ethnic groups and were early adopters of body worn cameras at two police agencies. As Sheriff, I will be accessible, involved and work in partnership to improve the significant disparities that exist. I have particular interest in improving mental health programming, chemical dependency programming, and reentry efforts at the county jail.

***Are you familiar with the organizations working towards police accountability in the Twin Ports? What is your relationship with them?***

Throughout my 16 years as a police chief I have worked closely with organizations to improve policing in our communities. For two years prior to my departure in Duluth, we had the NAACP review and audit tickets and arrests of Black youth in school. I appreciated and learned from the feedback and oversight. I also worked with a group of concerned citizens and elected officials to create a civilian review board in two cities. I am familiar with LEAN as well as VEMA on the Iron Range. I have spoken with VEMA members and leaders on several occasions. I had a really good working relationship with the Indigenous Commission and NAACP as the police chief in Duluth. We did not have anti-police protests when I was chief and at my last department the loudest police critic told me that our efforts had made him irrelevant. I have a solid track record of improving relations so that law officers feel better about their relationships in the community and our community members feel better about the law officers. Through strong community involvement efforts we can make things better for everyone.

***What are your views on Duluth's new Crisis Response Team? Are you familiar with the CAHOOTS model? What role do you think law enforcement should play in social issues such as mental health, housing, and drug use?***

I have been working on decoupling police from mental health response since the 1990's. As police chief, I partnered with St. Louis County Social Services to create the first embedded social worker at Duluth PD as chief - years ago. It received several awards for its innovative and helpful nature. I am somewhat familiar with the new Crisis Response Team but would like to see data on their work. I believe it is a well intended effort and support trying new ways to address these issues. In Wichita, I continued to work on the over-reliance on police for addressing society's ills. We embedded social workers to follow up on mental health crisis calls, embedded social work students for internships and volunteer work, created an integrated care team (<https://www.wichita.gov/WPD/Pages/ICT1.aspx>) and was a founding member of the

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Coalition in Wichita that focused on reducing barriers and coordinating services (<https://www.mhsacoalition.org>). Lastly, we applied for and received a DOJ grant to fund four housing case workers to focus on stabilization of those who are impacted by mental health and/or chemical dependency. I strongly support efforts like the CAHOOTS model.

***Is there anything else you would like to share with us?***

Relationships are important to me and I didn't just show up to the table last year. I have been heavily involved in community issues since the 1990's. I have been a leader and present during very difficult times and my desire and passion will keep me there as Sheriff. I have a strong record of volunteering and involvement with critical community and youth organizations. As Sheriff, I will be active, present, listen and work to make things better for everyone. I will be out on calls, helping and working. As someone told me today about how they saw my tenure "as the Duluth police chief you were a positive and welcomed presence in our community."

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**Chad Walsh**

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**Website:** <https://chadwalshforsheriff.com/>

***Tell us about yourself – your background, experience, and why you are running for Sheriff.***

After high school, I joined the U.S. Army and served as a military police officer. This is where I discovered my passion for public service. After my time as a civilian police officer in South Dakota, I realized how much I love Northern Minnesota and returned to Duluth. Eventually, I built my own business again with my wife. We started a portable toilet business with the plan to save enough money to build an indoor shooting range and training facility: Dead On Arms. Because I missed police work and community service, I joined a local Police Department as an officer. What really matters to me is a sense of place, mutual respect between the people in one's life and public service. I am running because I want to make a difference. I am committed to St. Louis County and want to ensure our high quality of life. It is time for a new generation of law enforcement that brings in new experiences and perspectives. I want to bring the community into the decision-making process and help bring the different agencies together to form a unit that works for public safety. I want a department that is more community focused like I am.

***What are your views on racial disparity in policing, particularly in St. Louis County? How have you worked to address racial disparities in your previous positions? How would you do so as St. Louis County Sheriff?***

Being that I do not currently work in St. Louis County I cannot say that I am aware of what kind of racial disparity is happening within this county in particular. However, if I am elected, I will make the time to discover what is happening within our county and address it with proper training for all staff members. Under the 14th amendment, we all are guaranteed to get equal protection of the laws. This amendment was created to stop state governments from discriminating against any Americans for any reason. As a

law enforcement officer who takes an oath to uphold the constitution, I would ensure that all officers are taking this seriously and looking at every crime with an unbiased eye.

***Are you familiar with the organizations working towards police accountability in the Twin Ports? What is your relationship with them?***

Yes, I am familiar with them. If I am elected, we will form a great working relationship with them to ensure accountability is one of the top priorities for everyone involved. For the past year and a half, I have been campaigning for this exact thing. If there is no accountability, then there is no trust. I want to form an accountability division where the public can go, be heard, and receive a full investigation. We all deserve that, at very least.

***What are your views on Duluth's new Crisis Response Team? Are you familiar with the CAHOOTS model? What role do you think law enforcement should play in social issues such as mental health, housing, and drug use?***

I believe the Crisis Response Team should not be limited to Duluth but should be used all over the county. Even though there already is a form of this in play within our county, the more entities working together on this team means that many more lives can be reached and changed before a crisis unfolds. The CAHOOTS model has been working very well for over 30 years and is something that more counties need to look into implementing. Having non-law enforcement individuals available that are skilled in de-escalation techniques can prove to be a huge asset to any team. I think Law enforcement should be further removed from the equation when it comes to mental health calls. In general, people in crisis or in the midst of committing a crime will respond better to a civilian rather than someone with a badge. However, I believe it is important to cross-train our officers as a backup to these civilian responders.

***Is there anything else you would like to share with us?***

I intend to bring a brand-new perspective to St. Louis County. I am an outsider who has not spent the last 20+ years in the Sheriff's office or in any leadership position within the law enforcement realm in the county. I am a business owner and police officer with an outside view of the changes that need to happen.