



Huntington Beach Police Officers Association

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2022 HBPOA PAC Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Bobby Britton

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Office Sought: City Council

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Please describe your background: Thirty plus years of military service, first the United States Marine Corps, then the California Army National Guard. Five deployments, three to combat (Gulf War 1991, Iraq in 2003, and Afghanistan in 2013). My most recent assignment was command of a Military Police Battalion, which I led while activated in the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego during the April 2020 Civil Unrest. I also worked for eight years along the Southwest Border supporting Law Enforcement Agencies in drug interdiction among many other assignments and activations. Of note, I was the brigade operations officer for the 49th Military Police Brigade during the worst fires in California history from 2017-2019. I coordinated with all forms of agencies at the local, county, state, and federal level (Sheriff, FEMA, etc). We worked with LEAs to stop rioting, looting, and protect lives and properties. In addition, because our unit had special capabilities as part of a response force for FEMA Region IX, we also helped recover bodies, decontaminate toxic sites, and moved thousands of tons of rubble and debris.

While in school, both high school and college, I worked in the service industry, as a barback, cook, server, bartender, and manager. I did some construction gigs too, mostly demo and manual labor such as digging footers and clean up (grueling work).

I authored my own book and I'm working on another one. I'm currently applying to several companies as well as some positions in the Orange County government. I retire from the Army 31 July 2022.

I have one daughter, Serenity, still at home, the others have all moved on to their own lives. She goes to Dwyer, of which I am a member of their School Site Council.

It's important to note that my background is blue collar; my dad left high school in the 9th grade to get a full time job to support his mother and younger brother. My dad's father left before my dad was born and never came back. My dad worked until he was 75 and never once complained about having to provide for his family. My two proudest moments of him is when he got his GED at age 50 because I received my college degree, and he wanted to 'catch up', and when he deployed to Iraq as a truck driver at age 64 because he wanted to contribute like his son did. My mom had the harder task of raising me most of the time in between working part time jobs.

Between the two of them they were just able to keep me in school and out of jail, long enough for me to enter military service and get my act together. My point is I still believe in working hard, having humility, and that they always made sure that I understood how important civic duty is. I took that to heart, which is why I'm here today, running for office. It's not about me, its about serving the community.

Education Completed? Degrees received?

- Bachelors of Science; Business Management of Information Systems
- Masters; Unconventional Warfare

Campaign Consultant: Spencer Hagaman (once I start officially running):

Other Staff: Campaign Manager: Celeste Wilson. Technology officer: Onay Arghandiwhal (once she comes back from training at Fort Polk; she is a website designer). Several at large volunteers who will help with my events and managing our canvassing efforts.

Campaign Consultant Cell: 714-293-3572

How much money has been raised? Technically, none, however Spencer has donors lined up for when I officially run.

Your total budget? Too early to say yet, however, I have a mitigating plan for any costs not able to be covered by contributions. My master's is in unconventional warfare, I think outside the box.

What is your cash on hand? 1,000

Have you or will you utilize personal funds? Yes. If yes, how much? 1,500 on stand by for initial costs, depending on first week of active campaigning will determine how much more I personally front. I'm willing to pay as much as I can afford. I can survive on PB&J and water for months.

Have you ever sought or held elected or appointed office? If yes, please describe. No.

Please list key endorsements: None yet. I will seek the OC Democratic Party's endorsement and the OCLF.

Do you accept political contributions and endorsements from law enforcement associations? I would love to.

1. What are the most critical issues facing law enforcement? Please be specific. What policies would you support and/or champion to help resolve these issues?

The negative campaigns against police in general and the movement to defund police specifically.

While frustrating, and unrealistic, the movement did cause some departments to have to do an internal review, and ask some hard questions. That is healthy, and I think it'll benefit them in the long term. What I mean by that is anytime you face dissolution or a reduction in your budget/assets, you immediately have to figure out what your priorities are. The military went through it during the 60s and 70s, and in the end came out of it fairly well (When Ronald Regan took office he let everyone remember that it's ok to be an American and pumped a lot of money into the DoD).

The key to any negative ad campaign and potential loss of funding is positive messaging backed up with quantifiable metrics. You have to tout how great you are doing without sounding like you're bragging and you have to demonstrate your success with facts. How often do you see a Starbucks ad? Rarely, yet what do people often say? 'Let's go get a Starbucks', as opposed to lets 'go get a coffee'. Starbucks advertises several ways, to include a technique called guerilla marketing. They capitalize on an image reinforced by word of mouth, and very savvy market research into locations.

Creating a positive image doesn't happen overnight, and battling for resources is always a constant struggle. When I took command of my battalion, they were underfunded, underappreciated, and the morale was terrible. They lacked equipment, they didn't train much, and there was even talk by some leaders of changing the unit to Infantry instead of Military Police. Within in a year of me taking command I had turned all that around. Our retention rate skyrocketed to the best in the state, we had new equipment, our training requests were funded, and Soldiers got to do what they signed up for, train and learn. I did it by a massive underground messaging campaign all through the organization by teaching the key leaders on my team how to talk to the right people the right way, eventually leading to the more funding, which let Soldiers train, which led to the morale improving, and then the word of mouth throughout the formations did the rest. People asked to come to our unit instead of leaving.

I would do the same thing as a Council Member when working with Chief Parra. Some of the questions I would ask is what are our challenges, what is the desired goal, by year, at least 10 years out, how do we fund it, and how do we craft the message that resonates with voters? That is the kind of thing I love to do and that I'm actually good at.

2. Do you think the Huntington Beach Police Department provides quality service for the cost? If not or improvement is needed, what are your ideas and solutions?

I feel safe in this City, and I do feel that if I called 911 I'd have an immediate and appropriate response. I don't know what the cost is to support that safe feeling, but it's probably worth it.

When I spoke with Chief Parra I felt comfortable with his training plan for his new officers and how to maintain his department's professionalism.

As for ideas and solutions, my approach to training to generate quality service at an appropriate cost is generally the same. Identify what the goals are, align the resources to support those goals, and develop a standard that all can understand and follow. Then it's a matter of enforcement and/or course corrections. I haven't met someone yet that got a job just to fail at it. Usually it's exigent life events or a

negative influence within the organization that is the catalyst for an employee's poor performance. If the person chooses not to improve, then document it, follow through with all requirements, and help that person leave the organization.

Meanwhile, I'd refer back to my strategy in question one to develop the right messaging campaign to underscore how the department does provide quality service or how it's improving its approach to delivering quality service at a reasonable cost to the taxpayers.

3. What are your thoughts on outsourcing police services and/or contracting with the Orange County Sheriff's Department?

I would like to discuss this in person so I can have better context. If you're saying all services outright would transfer to the OCSD, I would not support that. If there are some low density skill sets or capabilities that the OCSD could supply that we need but don't have, yes, that is a reasonable approach to support the City. What I wouldn't want to see is the HBPD subsumed by the Sheriff's Department. HB has too much individuality for that and it's important our Police are HB first and foremost. Plus what does that mean for all the employees in the HBPD now? Do they lose their jobs and then have to apply to the OCSD?

4. What is your position on privatization of local jails or state corrections operations?

As of yet I have not seen the value in privatization. They are often understaffed and that is dangerous. I also think when you change an inmate to a revenue generator, we completely dehumanize them. Not all inmates are incorrigible and there are institutions that have been successful in helping rehabilitate incarcerated individuals. Depending on sources, the difference in recidivism rates is negligible.

Is there potential for this to happen in OC? I would have a lot of questions. How would affect jobs for officers? Would the private companies require POST certifications? Would they match the same retirement plans peace officers have? Better pay? And what would that mean for our City? What would the private company guarantee in terms of rehabilitation programs for the inmates?

5. Do you support defined benefit pension plans for peace officers? All other public safety personnel? Are there any changes you would recommend to the current defined benefit pension structure?

From what I have heard from my friends who are peace officers, the retirement plan here in CA is a good one. I personally don't have enough institutional knowledge to answer this yet. I would love the chance to discuss it with you during the interview or afterwards.

6. Do you support peace officers wearing body cameras? Should peace officers be allowed to review the Body-Worn Camera video prior to providing a statement or writing their report?

Yes, I support them wearing it and think they should. That video could make a significant difference in a court case or a wrongful claim by a civilian against an officer. It is also a reminder to officers that they are accountable.

Yes, absolutely, they should be able to review the video before writing a report. If I had body cameras during some of my firefights I could have used that for so many things, to include training and verification.

7. Should public employee union members be allowed to voluntarily donate money to their unions for political purposes? If "Yes", should they be allowed to do this through voluntary employee payroll deductions?

This is a slippery slope because of the peer/union pressure that might incur if a member does not want to volunteer money to the union's designated stance on an issue or support for a candidate. Or conversely, if a union does not support something and the employee does. I think an employee should be able to do what they want with their money, so if Person A chooses to donate to the union then they should be able to. If it's done through payroll deductions then it doesn't seem as voluntary, so I think that should be made very clear to the employee what it is they are doing and why. Even then I think the union leadership should consider not allowing it.

8. Do you support the requirement that all employees within a bargaining unit classification represented by a collective bargaining agreement and an exclusive bargaining unit representative (union) pay their "Fair Share" portion of union dues for representation and services (non-political) they receive?

What I think you're asking here is if I support employee's union dues being covered by their department; I'm neither for or against until I've had a chance to hear from different entities that have influence on it or would be affected by it. If this is not what you mean please explain and I will try to answer it during the interview.

9. What are your top goals and objectives for Huntington Beach? Are you supportive of competitive pay benefits and working conditions in the public safety setting? Please explain.

- a. Addressing the State's requirement for building more housing. I understand why they did it but I don't agree with how it was implemented. One size fits all is not the right approach. This includes how the 13,000 homes we have to built are dealt with. Where are they going to go? What do we have to sacrifice to achieve this?
- b. Supporting First Responders, to include Chief Haberle's work on an independent validation of his department. Part of that support is also helping develop better optics for the department. An example is the purchase of Tesla's. Regardless of what the intent was there was negative push back on it. How was that decision arrived at? Bottomline though is that if people don't feel safe, then the government leadership needs to fix that or find someone who can.
- c. Protecting our parks and beaches from careless development.
- d. Homelessness. It's a reality, and this I've personally seen all over the City. We're not as bad as Westminster (like that shanty town near the 22/Beach Blvd), but as a world wide destination for tourists, we can do better. The Task Force we have is the right start.
- e. Downtown Main Street. Either we completely close off those several blocks and look at ways at reassessing those commercial property areas, or we reopen the whole street. Personally I think we should close it as it increases pedestrian areas, feels more home townish, and makes it easier to patrol the bars there. I get it, there are a lot of folks that harbor nostalgia for 'cruising' main street with their cars. That's fair, but there are two streets next to Main Street that are really underutilized. It's been two years now, we need a decision one way or the other.
- f. Protecting the environment.
- g. Listed last, but certainly not least important...improve the trust and confidence the public has in their city leadership. This can be done through collaboration and transparency. An unpopular decision can still be supported if the public is made aware of why it was made, what was done to mitigate negative impact, and provide possible future alternatives.

- h. I am supportive of competitive pay benefits and working conditions for public safety. I'd rather increase pay and/or benefits, which improves retention, and keep officers in HB rather than have turn over because they want to go elsewhere. As for working conditions, not sure what you're referring to here, but what I think of is the police HQ, which is 50 years old and does not account for today's integrated gender police force, which needs to be improved.

10. What needs to be changed or improved in Huntington Beach? What would you do to grow city revenues and the budget?

- Traffic along Beach Blvd. is frustrating, and with another 400 apartments going into Bella Terra, the Edinger/Beach intersection is going to be a nightmare. I don't have a ready answer on how to address that, but the collateral affects of that are going to become apparent eventually.
- Depending on which chart you look at and who you talk to, we have plenty of funds or we're going to be bankrupt soon. I definitely want to sit down with the department heads and review their budgets in detail.
- Creating revenue; the city brings money in a lot of money from tourism taxes. I would focus on that first, meaning what are we doing to make HB a premier site for people to visit. I can tell you the public bathrooms at the beach are not the best way to leave a positive experience.

11. What is your plan to deal with homelessness, mental illness, rise in crime, sober living homes, and illicit drug use in town?

I walk a lot every week, and I often walk off the beaten trail. I do that one, so I can have some quiet time to think, and two, because I every time I've moved or deployed, I wanted to know what the underbelly of the town looked like. There are homeless people in our City. Some are transients and don't maintain a regular presence in the City. Some are very territorial, working the same intersection or hustle and setting up camp in a park or along the rail line.

There is a rhetoric that homeless people are entitled to be left alone and are just misunderstood. The reality is many are mentally unwell and can't take care of themselves, they're an addict, or a criminal waiting for their next gig. To be fair, some are genuinely down on their luck folks that just need a chance. Funny thing is that category generally doesn't stay homeless too long.

When I worked counter narcotics there was always a chicken and egg debate. Many stated that if we really tore down the drug traffickers, we would get the drugs off the street. Others said if there was no demand, then drug dealers wouldn't have a job. I usually said you're both right and I'd get an incredulous stare. However, there is validity to both sides of the argument. If we can reduce the demand, then there will be less dealers. Yes, there will always be someone trying to sell, so it's important we go after them as well, meaning it takes time to build a case and then kick down doors.

My plan is 'd', all the above. I will support Chief Parra's Homeless Task Force, I'll work with treatment organizations to help with recovery, and I would like to see a long term plan for those that can't take care of themselves. Do I think we should have a lot of sober homes/treatment facilities in HB? No, not so much. Maybe that is something we can outsource to the Sheriff's Department in an unincorporated area.

Another argument has always been about marijuana being a gateway drug. 'If we legalize it then everyone will start doing cocaine in six months.' I don't think so, but there is also validity in that concern about leading to other drugs. I think the more salient point here is when folks are getting hooked on drugs. It's way too often starting in high school. There are drugs in our schools. We've done a better job as a nation in reducing cigarette use than we have at reducing underage drug use.

The challenge is connecting with kids so they can say no. A lot of that is parents. When I was a kid there was a mom network and if my dumb fool self did something wrong in one part of the city, that news usually got back home before I did. How do we build that network here? Time, messaging, cooperation, collaboration, and a lot of commitment.

Crime. My question would be with Chief Parra and his staff; why is it rising? Lack of aggressive patrolling? Weak deterrents in our laws and penalties? Desperation because of the economy? We're a transient site between a production area for drugs and a shipment site? There are so many variables here that I will defer to answer this question until I understand why it's rising.

What I can explain is that once the catalyst (s) for the rise (or even if it wasn't rising) is identified, then we can build a plan to address it. If we don't have enough patrol cars to deter, then we work on getting more cars (preferably not Tesla's). If the economy is bad, ok, what can we do in the city to help bolster jobs? Etc, etc.

When I lived in Oceanside back in the 90s we saw a lot of gangs move in because it was a natural stopping point between LA County and San Diego/Mexico. Out of that grew a lot of violence, crime, and drug use. I moved out of Oceanside in 98 but I've gone back and also followed some stories there. It took time, but the Oceanside government put a lot of effort into improving their downtown, addressing the crime, and expanding tourist options. It's better there now than it was when I lived there.

Part of my philosophy on this is that all the things I help work on probably won't be realized by me as I'll have long since moved on, like the adage a man plants a tree today so his grandkids can enjoy the shade years later.

12. What are your thoughts regarding BLM and/or the comments made by some to support defunding the police department?

Same thoughts as answered in question one. Black Lives Matter was originally an altruistic movement to address bias against Black Americans. I do think that there is still a valid need to be open and honest about how minorities are treated, but defunding the police is not the answer. At all.

13. Is there anything in your background, personal and/or professional experience we should be made aware of? If yes, please briefly describe.

Yes, I'm divorced but an equal and amiable co-parent with my ex-wife of our 13 year old daughter.

And in 1993 I was given a misdemeanor for a Wet and Reckless. That was incredibly painful and a maturing incident that never happened again. Losing my license, the stigma associated with getting arrested that night, the fines, never again. I had to ride my bike and/or take the bus for a couple of years while working three jobs and going to college. It was a bonehead thing to do, although it did wake me up to what responsibility and accountability really meant.

14. Do you support economic development? Planned and/or managed growth? Please explain, and comment on any proposed projects (housing; roads; transportation; water; infrastructure) that you think are good ideas, controversial or need additional review.

I do support development, but only if it's managed appropriately. Growth has to be met with adequate infrastructure such as roads, Police, Fire, schools, hospitals, and just plain density of humans. HB feels like it's about to burst, and we have to zone for 13,000 more homes. That political debate aside, I don't think we're ready for it yet.

However, there are underutilized commercial spaces in several of our business parks. I would like to see how we could attract more businesses back to the City. To do that I would want to meet collectively with business owners and several of the business clubs to build options and ideas.

15. Do you support changing current law as it relates to De-Escalation, Use of Force and Peace Officers Bill of Rights? Please explain.

I don't support any initiatives that will put officers or the public at risk because officers are afraid to do their job because they'll lose it for protecting themselves. Is beating someone to death right? No, of course not, and there are measures in place to hold officers accountable for it. What happened to George Floyd was tragic and preventable... but, we shouldn't slingshot to the other side of the spectrum and completely denude an officer's ability to use force on some crack head so whacked out they are a danger to themselves and everyone else around them. I have a really good friend who works graves in Contra Costa County and she's had to use force many, many times to protect herself, other officers, and other civilians. The general public really doesn't understand that many officers literally fight for their life every week.

16. Do you support elected or appointed positions (as proposed for the upcoming ballot) for: City Clerk and City Treasurer? City Attorney or any other positions?

I support what the voters voted for, and they said they want their Attorney, Clerk, and Treasurer to be elected, so 'yes'.

17. What is your position on increasing the age to become a peace officer (currently at 21 years of age) and requiring the applicant to have a four-year degree? What other changes to the job requirements do you think, if any, are needed?

I think the raise in age is appropriate as it's hard to find a young adult under 25 with the right maturity and life experience to be an effective officer right out onto the street, and many wouldn't have the patience to work in the office for a couple of years before going on patrol. As for requiring a degree, that might unnecessarily complicate things because it flatlines incentives and bars otherwise good candidates, like former service members. I don't think we have to try to be the FBI. I actually prefer a mix of new college graduates and experienced streetwise cops. What I do think is a good idea is to give those officers that don't have a degree a chance to go after it. I went to night school for both my degrees and I don't regret waiting until I was older. I appreciated what I was doing and what I was learning way more than if I had went to college just out of high school.

18. Should peace officers be licensed, like attorneys/doctors, etc., and thus be able to have their license revoked?

I'm not a fan because I'm not sure how practical would it be. How would we license everyone on the force now? How many hours would that take per license? What if a 10 year veteran fails the test? Does that mean he/she can't be a cop now? What curriculum would have to be pulled from the academy? How would this interface with POST, or does it replace it? I don't see the value up front considering any officer who is fired from a department will have to disclose that when applying to another one. I understand the desire for accountability but what most people don't know is we have to be very selective in what we broadcast reference officers being punished or fired.

19. What are your thoughts on 'qualified immunity' for peace officers?

This is similar to question 15. Right now cops are nominally able to do their job to protect themselves, lives, and in some instances, property. If we take away qualified immunity, many might be afraid to do anything lest they lose their job. The Chief is the one that should hold officers accountable and if that is not happening, then the City leadership needs to address it with the Chief. We need to be very careful how we set conditions for the officers on the street. I know first-hand what it's like to be hamstrung so bad you think you're going to die because someone a thousand miles away with zero situational awareness says 'no, do not engage'. Sometimes that means officers have to be 'creative' and that causes other problems.

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you. I know you have a difficult task to determine who you want to endorse. Obviously you want to back a candidate that meets your criteria for the endorsement but you also want that candidate to be a viable contender to gain enough votes to be elected. Endorsing someone with no chance of winning doesn't do anything in the long term for your interests.

I am definitely an underdog considering I have no name recognition, I haven't started to campaign yet, and I don't have a lot of cash on hand. I like those odds; I excel when the situation is tough. I file 1 August and my campaign kickoff is 13 August.

I wish you well with whomever you select and regardless whether you select me or not, I support First Responders, especially our Police.

Sign: Bobby Britton DATE 22 July 2022

Please return your completed questionnaire, prior to the submission deadline, to receive timely consideration. **The deadline for us to receive your questionnaire is no later than Friday, July 22nd. The interview process will be held Tuesday, July 26th.** Please email your responses to both persons listed below:

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And

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