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May 16, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Sachi A. Hamai
Chief Executive Officer

REPORT BACK – STATUS REPORT ON THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY PROBATION OVERSIGHT COMMISSION WORKING GROUP (ITEM NO. 4 FEBRUARY 2, 2016)

On February 2, 2016, the Board approved a motion to establish the Los Angeles County Probation Oversight Commission Working Group (Working Group) to assess the current landscape of entities tasked with any aspect of evaluating, monitoring and/or correcting the work of the Probation Department (Department). In the motion, a report back was requested from the Working Group regarding its progress and plans moving forward to achieve the goals set out in the motion. An amendment to the motion by Supervisor Antonovich was also approved to include an analysis of all resources allocated to oversight and monitoring efforts under the County's purview and recommendations on how those resources could be reallocated to improve oversight.

Background

The Working Group convened for the first time on March 10, 2016, and established its governance structure, electing Carol Chodroff (Third District appointee) as Chair, and Alex Johnson (Second District appointee) as Vice Chair. The remaining members of the Working Group are Jose Osuna (First District appointee); Gabriella Holt (Fourth District appointee) and Don Meredith (Fifth District appointee).

The Working Group has met four times thus far, and established its regular meeting schedule: every other Wednesday generally at 1:00 p.m. In the future, the Working Group will also hold a series of town hall meetings, in each of the Supervisorial Districts.

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The Working Group has determined that to accomplish the tasks outlined in the motion, it will proceed by conducting its work in three consecutive phases.

PHASE ONE: Information-Gathering

The Working Group is currently in the information-gathering stage, working to identify and assess the current landscape of entities tasked with evaluating, monitoring and/or correcting the work of the Department. In order to assess the past actions and oversight of the Department, and evaluate ongoing needs and determine what modifications might be adopted going forward, the Working Group has developed a schedule for presentations from all of the existing commissions, committees, agencies, and individuals who play different roles in evaluating and providing oversight over Department staff, facilities, financials, operations, programs, and population outcomes.

The Working Group has already heard testimony from the Auditor-Controller's Department of Justice (DOJ) Audit Compliance Unit, and the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee, County Counsel representing the County's Civil Grand Jury, Probation's DOJ Project Office and has received several reports from and continues to hold ongoing discussions with Interim, Chief Probation Officer Cal Remington. The Sybil Brand Commission, the Comprehensive Education Reform Committee, the Juvenile Reentry Council, the Office of the Independent Monitor, the Probation Commission, the Probation Outcomes Study Work Group, Probation's Contract Monitoring Office, VIP Services, and the Department's Bureau Chiefs with experience in the camps and the field are scheduled to present at each of the Working Group's subsequent meetings.

On May 25, 2016, the Working Group will also bring in the former Chair of the Sheriff's Oversight Commission, in order to learn lessons, discuss best practices, and increase efficiency in considering the formation of an Oversight Commission, to allow the Working Group to determine a Probation Oversight Commission is needed to replace or complement current work. The Working Group has discussed the fact that there are many similarities and lessons to be learned from the recent work to establish the Sheriff's Oversight Commission, and there is no need to "reinvent the wheel."

To supplement its information gathering, and provide a context for the substance of its meetings, the Working Group is also pursuing the possibility of holding several of its subsequent meetings in various Probation locations and facilities in each of the Supervisorial Districts, including the juvenile probation camps, halls, and day-reporting centers.

The Working Group anticipates this information-gathering phase will take a minimum of two months. Understanding that its task is a large and comprehensive one, the Working Group views this initial phase as essential to enable it to identify and examine alignment (or misalignment) between and/or overlaps and duplications in current oversight efforts.

PHASE TWO: Recommendation Regarding the Need for a Probation Oversight Commission

After completion of the information-gathering phase, the Working Group will then move into phase two of this task by: 1) determining how best to provide a comprehensive oversight of the entire Department; 2) recommending whether a Probation Oversight Commission could replace or complement current work; and 3) identifying where current overlaps or gaps might exist.

PHASE THREE: Development of a Proposal for Probation Oversight Commission, and, Recommendation about the Need for Oversight to Assess Juvenile and Adult Probation Operations Collectively or Separately.

After completing the first two phases, the Working Group will then move to Phase Three. In the third phase, the Working Group will develop and submit to the Board its recommended proposal for an investigative and monitoring structure to replace and/or improve the current milieu of the various divisions and disparate entities analyzing the Department. The Working Group's recommendations will also include an analysis of the resources allocated to each Probation oversight entity and identify how the new commission might access information necessary to provide oversight.

During this phase, the Working Group anticipates holding Town Hall meetings in each of the Supervisorial Districts.

While appreciating the importance of fulfilling its obligation in a diligent and efficient manner, the Working Group also understands that the scope of the work contemplated by this motion is vast and complex. To avoid sacrificing thoroughness and quality for the sake of efficiency, the Working Group anticipates a much longer time commitment to complete the work with which it has been charged. Our office will provide quarterly status reports of the Work Group's progress.

The Working Group currently has meetings scheduled through December 2016.

Should you have any questions, your staff may contact me or Sheila Williams, Public Safety, at (213) 974-1155.

SAH:JJ:SW
DC:cc

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Auditor-Controller
Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee
Probation