



# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

383 KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION / LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

## MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

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YVONNE BRATHWAITE BURKE  
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VIOLET VARONA-LUKENS, EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
(213) 974-1411

March 30, 2004

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisors:

### RECOMMENDATION REGARDING ALLOCATION OF REWARD FUNDS IN THE MATTER OF THE FATAL SHOOTING OF LOS ANGELES SHERIFF DEPUTY STEPHEN SORENSON

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD:

Make a finding that conviction of Donald Charles Kueck, the person responsible for the murder of Sheriff Deputy Stephen Sorenson, is impossible due to his death during the course of his apprehension; and approve the recommendation of the Reward Committee to distribute the reward funds in total amount of \$10,000, to the four individuals who provided information to the Sheriff's Department.

### PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

On August 2, 2003, Los Angeles County Sheriff Deputy Stephen Sorenson was fatally shot in the upper torso while following up on a routine trespassing investigation at a trailer located at 21110 East Avenue T-8, in the unincorporated area of Los Angeles known as Llano.

On August 5, 2003, on motion of Supervisor Antonovich, your Board established a \$10,000 reward fund for any information leading to the apprehension and conviction of the person or persons responsible for the murder of Deputy Sorenson.

During the investigation, the vehicle of Donald Charles Kueck was found 2½ miles from the crime scene. Authorities began looking for Mr. Kueck for questioning as a possible witness to the crime.

On August 3, 2003, investigators met with Rebecca M. Welch, step daughter to Donald C. Kueck, who provided pertinent information that resulted in the positive identification of Mr. Kueck as the suspect in the murder of Deputy Sorenson. Ms. Welch maintained constant communication with the suspect and investigators throughout this investigation.

Delores Smith contacted investigators because she believed that she had information pertinent to the investigation. Ms. Smith directed investigators to Ronald Steres. On August 5, 2003, investigators interviewed Mr. Steres who provided accurate information that led to the identification of Mr. Kueck as the suspect in the crime.

In addition, investigators interviewed Gilberto Castellano who lives on the same property as Mr. Steres. In an effort to establish contact with the suspect, investigators used the home of Mr. Castellano on several occasions as a staging area.

On the morning of August 8, 2003, Mr. Castellano heard noises coming from inside the residence of Mr. Steres. Mr. Castellano believed that the suspect was in the residence and confirmed his suspicions by contacting the girlfriend of Mr. Steres. Ms. Smith was then contacted by the girlfriend of Mr. Steres so that she could advise the investigators of the suspect's whereabouts. In order to confirm the whereabouts of the suspect, investigators asked Ms. Welch to establish telephone contact with the suspect. Following her conversation with the suspect, Ms. Welch relayed to investigators additional information and a confession to the crime.

When deputies arrived at the residence of Mr. Steres to apprehend the suspect, an altercation ensued with law enforcement and as a result a fire erupted in the residence while the suspect was still inside. The suspect was unable to escape the fire and died at the scene.

In 1993, the Board of Supervisors adopted an amendment to the County Code which established procedures for offering cash rewards for information leading to the apprehension and/or conviction of persons guilty of criminal acts. Your Board, from time to time has offered such rewards to encourage citizens to come forward and assist law enforcement with their investigations.

A panel made up of individuals representing the Sheriff, the Chief Administrative Officer, the County Counsel and the Executive Officer of the Board reviewed the claim filed by the Sheriff's Department on behalf of the individuals for the reward fund. The panel has recommended that the \$10,000 be awarded as follows: \$5,000.02 to Rebecca M. Welch; and \$1,666.66 each to Ronald Steres, Delores Smith and Gilberto Castellano.

#### Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

Approval of the above recommendation supports the County Strategic Goal of Service Excellence. Publication in local newspapers and posting of reward notices on the County website may encourage persons to provide information to law enforcement which could lead to the arrest and conviction of the individuals who commit crimes, thereby improving the quality of life of all citizens.

#### FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

The Board of Supervisors established a \$10,000 reward fund. Pursuant to provisions in the County Code, the reward is to be paid from the Board of Supervisors' discretionary funds in equal shares of \$2,000 from each member's account.

#### FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The action recommended is in compliance with the County Code, Title 4 - Revenue and Finance relating to rewards; and specifically Section 4.50.010B which states, "conviction of the person or persons responsible for the crime shall be required for payment of a reward unless the Board of Supervisors makes a finding of impossibility of conviction due to the death or incapacity of such person or persons."

A notice of the reward was published in the Antelope Valley Press. In addition, the reward notice was posted on the Board of Supervisors' web site. The original filing period to submit a claim to the Executive Office for the reward money expired on January 2, 2004.

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
March 30, 2004  
Page 4

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

There is no impact on current County services.

Respectfully submitted,



VIOLET VARONA-LUKENS  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

R:\Reward Letters\Reward letter regarding Deputy Stephen Sorenson.DOC

c: Sheriff  
District Attorney  
Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel  
Auditor-Controller