LAW ENFORCEMENT Fri 1-31-14 Daily Breeze

New sheriff takes oath on Lee Baca's last day on job

By Christina Villacorte
christina.villacorte@langnews.com
@LADNvillacorte on Twitter

John Scott

There's a new sheriff in town.

Interim Los Angeles County Sheriff John Scott took the oath of office Thursday, just two hours after Sheriff Lee Baca's resignation took effect.

By taking the oath of office administered by county Board of Supervisor executive officer Sachi Hamai and accepting the badge presented by Supervisor Don Knabe, Scott takes over a department battered by scandal.

"What I'd like to do is restore dignity to the department ... and restore the trust and confidence to the office," Scott said.

"I look forward to serving Los Angeles County and doing all that I can in the next 10 months to bring about the appropriate change that is in order, and to see that the next sheriff — the elected sheriff — comes in somewhat seamlessly."

Scott is on leave from the Orange County Sheriff's Department, where he was undersheriff — the No. 2 position in the department.

Scott announced plans to meet with each of the candidates for sheriff, so he could learn their plans for the department and "try to mesh many of those things into what we're doing over the next 10 months."

He vowed not to be a mere "placeholder" until Baca's replacement is elected either during the June 3 primary or the Nov. 4th runoff, and is sworn in Dec. 1. He plucked former LASD Division Chief Neil Tyler out of retirement to serve as his second-in-command and had a ready answer when asked about his top priorities.

He plans to ask all the captains to conduct a "SWAT" analysis, so that he can assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within respective bureaus, and to work closely with the jail chief and county budget manager to implement the changes recommended by the blue-ribbon Citizens Commission on Jail Violence.

He also invited members of the department to express their thoughts about reform, telling them, "I would like to hear from you personally what you think would be important for any kind of change that needs to take place."

Baca

FROM PAGE 1

2008 and 2013. Meanwhile, property crimes slid 11 percent during the same period.

Baca's record, however, has been tarnished by back-to-back scandals in recent years — everything from thuggery in the jails to questionable product endorsements — and he has decided to leave without touting his crime-fighting credentials or, indeed, any fanfare at all.

Unlike former Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who threw a massive farewell party with guests that included former President Bill Clinton and Stevie Wonder, Baca wants to "just kind of quietly move out," according to his spokesman.

Steve Whitmore said the sheriff spent his last week packing up his office, filling out reams of paperwork for his pension, writing personal letters and visiting various bureaus of the department to say thank you.

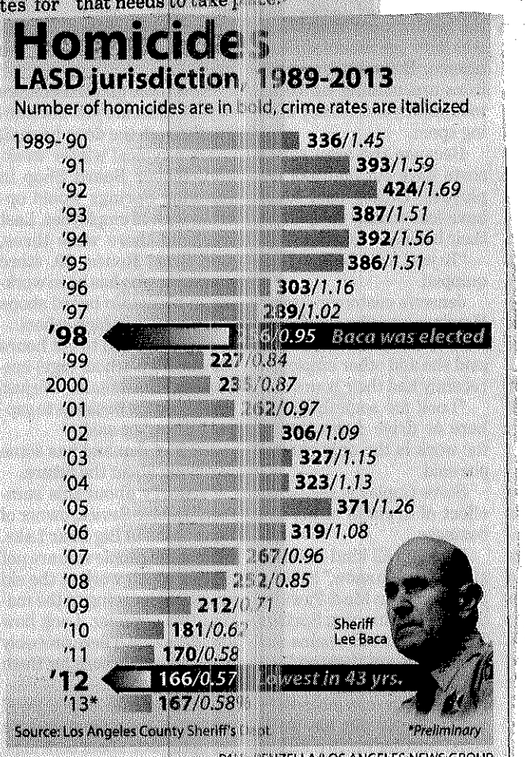
A letter to the 18,000 men and women of the department will be delivered today.

Baca declined all media requests for interviews and photo shoots in recent weeks, but he did sit down with the Los Angeles News Group the day after he announced his retirement and defended his 15-year tenure as sheriff.

"We have record low crime — a 40-year record low — which means less violence and less property loss," Baca said. "But public safety is not merely absence of crime. Public safety is heightening the dignity of all people."

He stressed that his pioneering education-based incarceration program has helped inmates obtain diplomas and job skills to help them turn away from a life of crime.

"I'm never satisfied with the work I've done, but I do know is what the department was like when I came in 1998, and what it is today," Baca said.



PAUL PENZELLA/LOS ANGELES NEWS GROUP

ing visitors, putting handcuffs on an Austrian consular official without justification, threatening an FBI agent at her home, and hiding an FBI informant.

Baca complained the continued focus on the problems was among his reasons for dropping out of the June 3 election, and for retiring.

"I said, 'Wait a minute. I've done this 48 years and there's still a lot of criticism, as though all these incidents have just recently happened, and yet it happened three, four or five years ago and I've substantially corrected it," he said.

"There's not a statement that says, 'gee, the crime is at record low, there's more training, more supervision, the culture is education-based now, the inmate population is more subdued — that never gets reported."

So Baca departs today, with the vacancy to be filled by interim Sheriff John Scott, who is on loan from the Orange County Sheriff's Department.

Candidates for election to sheriff include Long Beach Police Chief Jim McDonnell, and current and former LASD officials Todd Rogers, James Hellmold, Paul Tanaka, Bob Olmsted, and Lou Vince and Patric Gomez.

Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky hopes the new sheriff will be "somebody who is open and committed to reform in dealing with the constitutional policing issues, a fiscal taskmaster who knows the value of the dollar and will live within budget, and someone who's got ideas about the county jail system that make more sense than spending a couple billion dollars on new jails with fewer beds."

Robert Stern, former president of the Center for Governmental Studies, believes Baca was sheriff for too long and that he became "too stale to be what the public needs and wants."

"You're there for so long that you think that you're going to be there forever and you can't do anything wrong and you can't take criticism, and you don't understand why people would criticize you," he said.

"The new sheriff should pledge and there should be a constitutional amendment that three terms is enough" to avoid making the sheriff "[illegible]"

Accomplishments

He rattled off other accomplishments, including expanding the department from 13,500 employees to 18,000; taking over the duties of the Office of Public Safety; acquiring contracts to police the cities of Compton, Maywood and Cudahy; creating the Office of Independent Review to provide oversight; building three new sheriff's stations and a crime lab on the Cal State L.A. campus; and renovating the Hall of Justice, the historic seat of the Sheriff's Department, due to open later this year.

Connie Rice, prominent civil rights activist and co-founder of the Advancement Project, praised Baca as a "maverick," who practiced the concept of "community policing" and "trust policing" well before anybody else in law enforcement did.

In particular, she remembered how he reached out to the Muslim community in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

"He's almost like a social worker with a gun — I've never seen a cop with so much compassion for others," she said.

Rice and Supervisor Gloria Molina, however, agree Baca could have been a better manager.

"I think the sheriff allowed his trust and confidence in certain people in his department to take his focus away from managing and providing leadership," Molina said. "That's one of the failings he had along the way, but at the end of the day, it's unfortunately what he'll probably be remembered for."

In 2012, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a class-action lawsuit against Baca, accusing him of condoning a pattern of deputies using excessive force on inmates, and a Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence denounced Baca's "failure of leadership."

Later, the U.S. Department of Justice accused the department of racism in the Antelope Valley, and a federal jury held Baca personally liable for $100,000 after deputies beat an inmate.

Late last year, the FBI arrested 18 sheriff's deputies, sergeants and lieutenants alleging various acts of misconduct, including beat-

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT Thur 1-30-14 Daily Breeze

Baca retires under cloud

Lawman steps down today, but even amid scandal he can point to dramatic drop in county crime

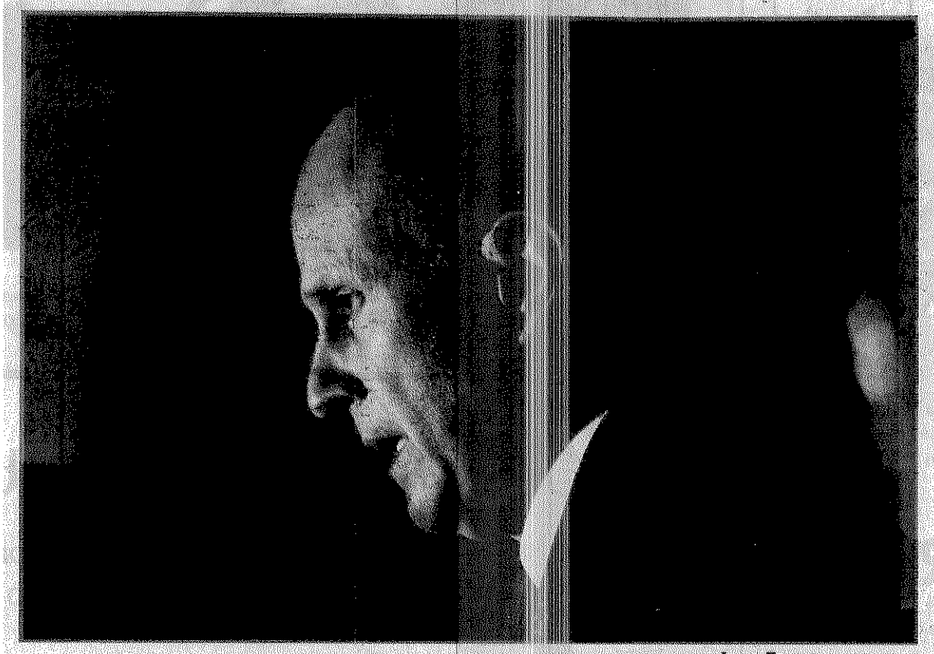
By Christina Villacorte
christina.villacorte@langnews.com
@LADNvillacorte on Twitter

Sheriff Lee Baca retires at noon today — in disgrace, some would say — but even his critics cannot deny his legacy includes impressive declines in crime.

Newly released preliminary data show 167 killings within the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department in 2013 — one more than the year before, but lower than any other homicide count since 1970, even though the population grew dramatically over that span of time.

Baca, 71, saw a few spikes in the crime rate since being sworn in 1998, but the trend has headed steadily downward since at least the past five years. According to the available statistics, violent crimes such as murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault plunged 27 percent overall between

BACA » PAGE 7



IRFAN KHAN Los Angeles Times

CONTROVERSIAL TENURE

L.A. County Sheriff Lee Baca leaves office Thursday. Scandals have superseded his achievements.

Thur 1-30-14 LA Times

CONSUMED BY CRISES

He rode into office on high hopes, but will be remembered for scandals, despite his many achievements.

By Robert Faturechi and Jack Leonard

For Sheriff Lee Baca, it was a legacy moment. He was on Capitol Hill, testifying before a congressional hearing on the radicalization of American Muslims. Conservative lawmakers were grilling him, pressing him to acknowledge that the Muslim groups he embraced after 9/11 may have had criminal elements.

Baca wasn't having it.

"We don't play around with criminals in my world," he shot back.

With dozens of cameras trained on him, the sheriff made the case that American Muslims were being unfairly persecuted and should be treated as partners, not suspects, in the fight against terror.

The tense exchange in 2011 made national news, burnishing Baca's image as a lawman who bucked law enforcement stereotypes and embraced a softer side of policing.

Back in Southern California, a different narrative was playing out in his department.

Just two weeks earlier, Baca's deputies allegedly beat a man visiting his brother in the Los Angeles County jail in an incident that would later result in federal indictments. Baca's subordinates had recently fired dozens of officers with histories of serious misconduct. And in the Antelope Valley, Baca's deputies were involved in searches and detentions that federal authorities would later say violated the constitutional rights of black and Latino residents.

Baca's defense of Muslim Americans on the national stage would turn out to be a high point in his 15-year tenure. Since then, the Sheriff's Department has been rocked by one scandal after another. And a different take on Baca emerged: a disengaged manager who lacked the managerial skill and sway to get his 18,000-person department to follow his vision.

As a federal investigation into jail brutality grew, Baca admitted he was out of touch.

"People can say, 'What the hell kind of leader is that?' The truth is I should've known," Baca said a few months after his triumphant [See Baca, A14]

County to study cost of child protection ideas

WED 2-5-14 LA Times

BY GARRETT THEROLF

Los Angeles County supervisors agreed Tuesday to study the financial feasibility of reform recommendations made by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection.

In December, the commission released an interim report calling the county's child welfare system "dysfunctional" and in need of "fundamental change."

The commission began its work last summer to improve the county's child welfare system after the death of Gabriel Fernandez, 8.

Gabriel was found in May with his skull cracked, three ribs broken, and his skin bruised and burned. BB pellets were embedded in his lung and groin, and two teeth were knocked out. County social workers had investigated six reports of abuse but allowed Gabriel to stay with his mother and her boyfriend.

The commission recommended that the county's system of clinics be used to screen all children entering foster care, as well as children under age 1 who may be victims of child abuse.

The clinics are designed to expertly detect child abuse and provide comprehensive medical and mental health assessments so that children receive the correct services in foster care.

Also, the commission said public health nurses should work with investigators in all cases involving children younger than 1.

They also proposed that the district attorney's office act as a clearinghouse for child abuse cases, working with the county's 46 law enforcement agencies. The commission said central coordination is needed because it found that police agencies often do not cross-report abuse complaints with county child welfare officials and fail to properly train officers on how to handle child abuse cases.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas asserted that the recommendations regarding public health nurses and required clinic visits could be implemented with existing resources, but the other supervisors disagreed after hearing testimony about the heavy caseloads for the nurses and the inability to reassign many of the nurses to investigations because of federal regulations concerning their funding.

"When you say this must be done under existing funds, you've thrown a real wrench into the whole problem, and it will blow up until it's solved," Supervisor Gloria Molina said.

"Common sense dictates that we're not going to be able to do it within existing resources," Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky said.

The supervisors also reiterated their preference to wait until the commission has finalized its entire package of recommendations before granting approval.

David Sanders, the commission's chairman, said he was pleased with the board's willingness to move forward in the meantime.

garrett.therolf
@latimes.com

A

Sheriff leaves mixed record

[**Baca,** from A1]
Washington trip. "So now I do know."

As Baca makes way for his successor, even his supporters see the contradiction in his legacy. Baca, whose resignation takes effect Thursday, arrived as a different kind of sheriff, one who talked about tolerance, educating jail inmates and policing that wasn't based on force and intimidation. He leaves a department accused by federal authorities of brutality against jail inmates and racially biased treatment of minority residents.

"I know he's got to be destroyed inside to be going out this way," said Brian Moriguchi, head of the union for sheriff's supervisors.

'Breath of fresh air'

In many ways, Leroy David Baca represented a stark difference from the traditional L.A. law enforcement leader. Raised by his grandparents in working-class East Los Angeles, Baca dropped out of community college. He was hired as a beat cop with the Sheriff's Department and worked his way up the ranks, earning a doctorate from USC. Along the way, he developed a philosophy about policing that went beyond simply arresting criminals and included rehabilitation and education.

In 1998, as a top commander within the department, he launched a campaign to unseat his longtime mentor, incumbent Sheriff Sherman Block. One top aide recalled Baca's approach then as being the opposite of Daryl Gates, the controversial former LAPD chief criticized for a militaristic take on law enforcement that alienated minority communities. Baca drew his support from ethnic communities within the county.

"I felt that he was going to be a real change for the department and a breath of fresh air," said veteran civil rights attorney R. Samuel Paz, who later became a fierce critic of Baca's leadership.

The runoff between Baca and Block, 74, was expected to be close, but days before the election, the incumbent died from injuries he suffered after slipping in the shower.

In his first years in office, Baca impressed some reformers.

He required his deputies to memorize a pledge to fight against racism, sexism and homophobia. He created dozens of ethnic advisory committees, formalizing a pipeline between his office and the county's many minority groups. He opened a drug and alcohol treatment center for jail inmates as part of rehabilitation efforts.

Baca successfully pushed for a watchdog agency that would monitor how the department handled allegations of misconduct by deputies. The move was all the more notable because it came at a time when the LAPD was mired in the Rampart corruption scandal.

Baca's subordinates felt the culture inside the agency shifting, even in subtle ways.

Moriguchi, the union boss, recalled first meeting the sheriff when they shared a flight to a hate crime conference. Moriguchi, a sergeant at the time, had become widely known after he sued the department, alleging he was retaliated against for complaining about an Asian caricature sketched onto a station whiteboard.

"Many department executives held that against me, told me my career was over," Moriguchi said.

He said he had no intention of bringing the lawsuit up during their flight, but Baca turned to him and brought it up himself, apologizing to the young subordinate for what he had been put through.

"He is an extremely caring and compassionate person," Moriguchi said. "He's the kind of guy I'd love to have to my house for a barbecue and talk. But as a sheriff and as a leader that kindness ... is a flaw."

A few years into his tenure, Baca was faced with a series of problems. Racially motivated violence erupted between black and Latino inmates. Sheriff's officials were blamed for failing to prevent a string of inmate killings by other inmates.

By the mid-2000s, Baca was under fire for releasing thousands of inmates early from his cash-strapped jails, with many of the freed going on to commit new crimes.

His department was accused of giving actor Mel Gibson preferential treatment following his 2006 drunk driving arrest in Malibu. A year later, Baca's decision to free Paris Hilton weeks before she finished her jail term for a probation violation made international news.

The sheriff weathered the storms, comfortably winning reelection. The LA Weekly began calling him the "Teflon Sheriff."

'Overly trusting'

In 2011, while walking in New York City after another speaking engagement about the Muslim community, Baca described his approach this way:

"I know I'm a little naive. I know I am overly trusting. That's who I choose to be. If you're uncomfortable with others, you're not in a position to lead. I've created somewhat of a palace in my mind because, if you don't, this world is your prison," Baca said. "I can take the attacks. Attack me! Am I going to change who I am? No. Because it works."

> 'I've created somewhat of a palace in my mind because, if you don't, this world is your prison... Am I going to change who I am? No. Because it works.'
>
> — LEE BACA, Los Angeles County sheriff

But his determination to trust people, particularly his subordinates, set up his downfall, according to more than a dozen county and sheriff's officials who worked with him.

When Baca's department came under fire for hiring scores of problem cops, Baca said he had entrusted his former undersheriff to maintain the agency's recruitment standards. When an inmate abuse scandal broke out, Baca complained of being left in the dark by his top aides. And when it was discovered that sheriff's officials were fast-tracking friends and relatives for jobs, Baca asserted that the program was started without his knowledge.

County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky said Baca made the mistake of trusting subordinates who didn't fully accept his philosophy.

"You had this disconnect between what he professed and what happened," he said.

The damage that caused was amplified, those around Baca said, because the sheriff was not particularly interested in the nuts-and-bolts of managing a bureaucracy. Baca's aides recalled the four-term sheriff devoting his attention instead to pet projects: creating education programs for inmates, reaching out to Muslims both at home and abroad after 9/11, battling homelessness.

That approach at times yielded historic results. Former Dist. Atty. Steve Cooley, for example, credited Baca with spearheading the creation of a state-of-the-art countywide crime lab to help law enforcement solve crimes.

But the approach, according to some aides, also distracted the sheriff and left subordinates grumbling and confused.

In 2010, as the department wrapped up construction of the new South Los Angeles station, Baca inserted himself into minor design elements.

Records and interviews show he wanted the accent tiles in the bathrooms to be green, not red — and the partitions between toilet stalls to be stainless steel, not painted. At an expense of more than $22,000, new products were ripped out and replaced.

A blue-ribbon commission investigating the jails' problems issued a searing critique of Baca's management, saying a chief executive in private business who "remained in the dark or ignored problems plaguing one of the company's primary services for years," as Baca did, would probably have been replaced.

Despite Baca's frequent vows to combat racism, the U.S. Justice Department last year accused sheriff's deputies of engaging in widespread unlawful searches of homes, improper detentions and unreasonable force in what the government said was a systematic effort to discriminate against African Americans who received low-income subsidized housing in the Antelope Valley.

Historic crime lows

Earlier this month, when Baca abruptly announced he was stepping down, he reminded reporters of the good he had done: historically low crime, wide-ranging reforms to his troubled jails, his embrace of the county's ethnic communities.

"Unfortunately," said county Supervisor Gloria Molina, "we're all about the last thing we did... At the end of the day, he just may be remembered for his resignation, which would be a disservice to him."

robert.faturechi@latimes.com
jack.leonard@latimes.com

Interim sheriff pick in limbo

Baca's choice to take over when he steps down lacks required state certification.

By Abby Sewell and Robert Faturechi

The law enforcement leader many expected would replace Sheriff Lee Baca when he steps down next week does not have the required credentials, complicating the job of Los Angeles County supervisors who must pick an interim sheriff.

When Baca unexpectedly announced his plans to drop his reelection bid and retire at the end of this month, he recommended that supervisors appoint Assistant Sheriff Terri McDonald to run the department until voters select a permanent sheriff later this year.

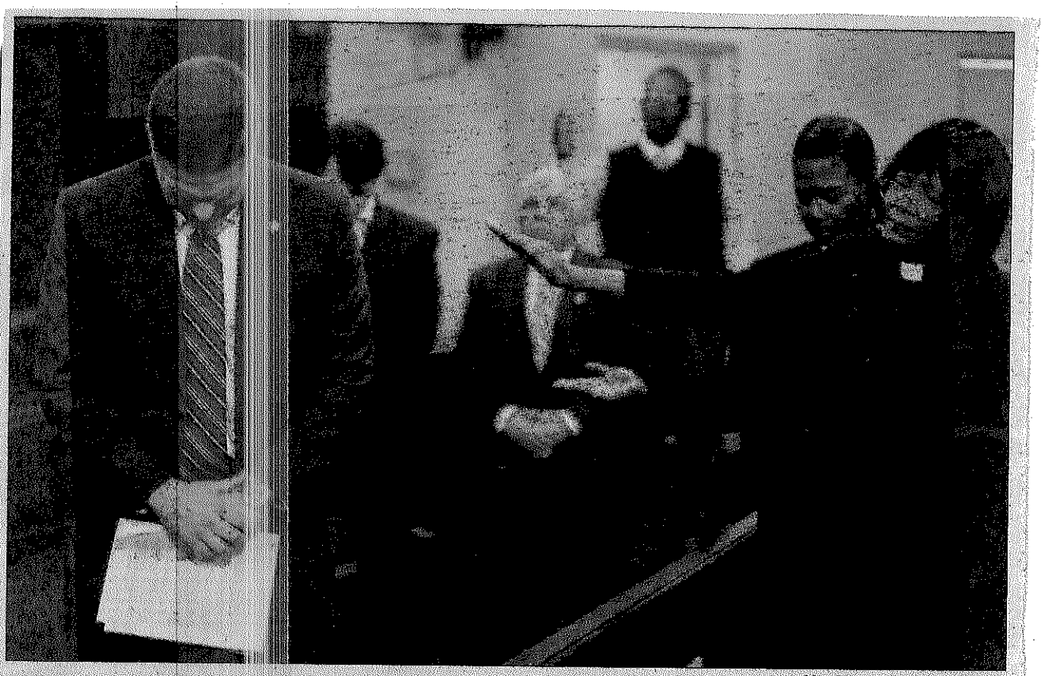
McDonald, a former state corrections official, was brought in last year to oversee the department's massive and troubled jail system and is highly regarded by the supervisors.

But state law requires that sheriff's candidates have either advanced certification through the state Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training or specific types of field experience and education as a law enforcement officer. McDonald has neither.

The supervisors will meet behind closed doors Thursday to discuss the interim appointment.

Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky said after Baca's resig-

[See Sheriff, AA2]



Mel Melcon Los Angeles Times

Running for sheriff

Assistant Sheriff James Hellmold, above left, bows his head Wednesday during a prayer with the Rev. Gayle Davis-Culp at First AME Church in Los Angeles before announcing his candidacy for Los Angeles County sheriff. At right, Bob Olmsted announces his plan to overhaul the Sheriff's Department in a news conference at the Men's Central Jail.

Doriane Raiman Los Angeles Times

Interim sheriff pick hits a snag

[**Sheriff,** from AA1]

nation that he thought the interim sheriff should not be running for the permanent post.

An aide to Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich echoed that sentiment Wednesday, saying the department needs someone who can "dedicate their full-time attention to managing it" rather than to running a campaign.

A candidate appointed to the interim post could also gain a political advantage by being able to identify themselves to voters as the incumbent.

Two of the three current assistant sheriffs other than McDonald — Todd Rogers and Jim Hellmond — are running for the office, along with ousted Undersheriff Paul Tanaka, retired sheriff's Cmdr. Bob Olmsted and Long Beach Police Chief Jim McDonnell.

The board could opt to appoint an outsider, or a retired sheriff's official to the interim post.

Supervisor Gloria Molina declined to comment and supervisors Don Knabe and Mark Ridley-Thomas did not respond to requests for comment Wednesday.

Sheriff's spokesman Steve Whitmore acknowledged that there were questions about the legality of appointing McDonald and said there have been talks of overcoming that by promoting her to the now vacant post of undersheriff, the department's traditional second-in-command role.

"Then she could run the department as the undersheriff and there will be no prohibitions against her doing that," Whitmore said. Whitmore said Baca recommended McDonald for the post because he saw her as an outsider, but one with a year's worth of experience at the agency.

David Sommers, a spokesman for county Chief Executive William T Fujioka, said McDonald could oversee the department if appointed undersheriff, but the board would retain the power to appoint someone else as interim sheriff.

McDonald declined to comment on the selection process, saying the choice is up to the supervisors.

McDonald's potential appointment as acting sheriff has prompted some grumblings within the agency because she comes from the state prison system and has little experience in patrol operations, which is the bulk of what the department does.

Whitmore said that if McDonald were selected she could always get advice from Cecil Rhambo — the only one of the three remaining assistant sheriffs not running for the post.

A blue-ribbon commission created by the county to look at allegations of widespread abuse and misconduct by deputies in the county jails recommended that the department recruit an outside custody expert who would be accountable for problems in the lockups. McDonald was hired to fill that role, and some have expressed concerns about taking her out of it.

Anna Pembedjian, public safety deputy to Antonovich, said the supervisor sees McDonald's role in the custody division as crucial: "The Sheriff's Department is a large agency and custody by itself is a full-time job," she said.

Whitmore said that a subordinate of McDonald could take over running the jails and that such a move would not stymie reform efforts.

abby.sewell@latimes.com
robert.faturechi
@latimes.com

Supervisor obtains permit

Sat 2-1-14 LA Times

Mark Ridley-Thomas' request comes after Times story on garage.

BY JACK LEONARD AND PAUL PRINGLE

Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas obtained a building permit Friday to renovate what appears to be an improperly converted garage at his Leimert Park home by adding a carport and removing a section of the detached building.

The request to approve the work comes after The Times reported that county-paid crews installing a security system last year replaced his garage's interior walls, installed electrical wiring and equipment, and put in appliances — without city permits.

The newspaper reported that the detached garage had been converted into an office with a restroom before the work was done, apparently without permits.

Online records show that city building officials issued a permit Friday to add a two-vehicle carport and convert the garage into a recreation room with a half-bathroom. In addition, the permit calls for the removal of a five-

[See Permit, AA4]

Los Angeles Times

RIDLEY-THOMAS' permit would add a carport and convert the garage into a rec room.

Supervisor obtains his permit

Sat 2-1-14 LA Times

[**Permit,** from AA1]

by-19-foot section of the building.

Bob Steinbach, a spokesman for the city's Department of Building and Safety, said inspectors have visited the home as part of an investigation into whether Ridley-Thomas' garage had been converted without permits. The probe was launched in response to a complaint after the Times report about the county work performed at the supervisor's home.

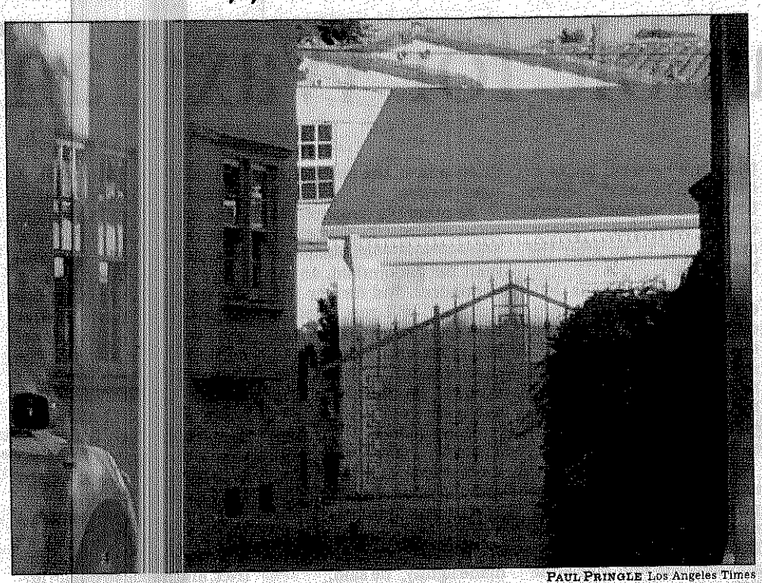
Steinbach said city officials still have to perform further inspections of the garage. As part of the permit sought Friday, he said, inspectors would conduct a thorough review of any work previously done without approval. He said inspectors, for example, usually punch holes in drywall to examine unpermitted electrical and plumbing work.

"That will all be part of the permit," he said. "There are a lot of inspections that have to happen."

Lisa Richardson, a spokeswoman for Ridley-Thomas, said the work proposed under Friday's permit "is a private matter and no public employees are involved." The permit lists the contractor as Yor Construction and Investments Inc., a Valley Village-based firm.

Ridley-Thomas has declined repeated requests from The Times to answer questions about last year's work by county-paid crews on his garage.

In an interview last week with radio station KCRW-FM (89.9), he said the garage had been converted before he bought the home more than 20 years ago. A Times check of city building records turned up no permits for the conversion or for last year's work by the county.



PAUL PRINGLE Los Angeles Times

SUPERVISOR Mark Ridley-Thomas has declined requests from The Times to answer questions about last year's work by county-paid crews on his garage.

The supervisor has long called for aggressive code enforcement to prevent deadly fires in buildings —including garages — that were not permitted.

In 1997, when he was a Los Angeles city councilman, Ridley-Thomas called on the city's Department of Building and Safety to address "potentially fatal conditions which are too often present in illegally converted garages." In his motion, which followed the deaths of eight people in garage apartments, Ridley-Thomas suggested several possible solutions, such as requiring homeowners to obtain permits and inspections or fining or jailing property owners for renting out converted garages as places to live.

Last year, Ridley-Thomas sent out announcements from his official county Twitter feed while visiting a burned-out auto mechanics shop in East Rancho Dominguez where a mother and child had been killed in a fire. "No family should be in danger bc of unsafe bldg conditions," one tweet said. That was soon followed up with another: "Just not acceptable. Enforce the code. Protect life and property — in that order."

His spokeswoman said the "supervisor never has rented out his garage and nor has anyone ever lived in it while he has owned the property."

A county project manager who oversaw the work by county crews at Ridley-Thomas' home told The Times that the project lasted seven days in September. John Thompson said workers replaced the garage's interior wood-paneling with drywall and dug a 60-foot-long trench across the property to bury conduit and make more electrical power available to the structure. They also installed a wall-mounted heat-and-air unit, a flat-screen television and a refrigerator in the garage.

Several electrical and security systems experts told The Times that much of the work appeared to go beyond what would be required for even a high-end security system.

Generally, permits must be obtained for the installation of restrooms, air conditioners, electrical wiring and drywall, according to the Department of Building and Safety. Violators of the city's permit rules could be ordered to pay penalties and correct any improper work, the department website says.

Thompson said he believed the county crews did not need permits because they conduct their own inspections. But a spokesman for the city Building and Safety Department said permits were required because the work was done on a private home.

Ridley-Thomas told KCRW that he repaid the county nearly $4,000 for the cost of appliances that were installed during the project and extra labor performed by county crews in September. He did not offer a breakdown of the reimbursements or say when he made them.

The county has provided to The Times heavily redacted records that list the cost of the security work at $10,038. It was unclear whether that amount accounted for any reimbursements.

jack.leonard@latimes.com
paul.pringle
@latimes.com