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Deschutes County Board of Commissioners
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Dear Commissioners,

I am honored to submit my application for the position of Sheriff of Deschutes County. With nearly 18 years of dedicated service in the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office and a lifelong commitment to public safety, I believe I bring the vision, experience, and leadership needed to serve our community with integrity and excellence.

Throughout my career, I have served in nearly every capacity within the Sheriff's Office—from patrol and investigations to narcotics enforcement, SWAT command, and executive leadership as Detective Lieutenant. My experiences have taught me the importance of accountability, teamwork, and transparent communication, both within the agency and with the communities we serve.

I am proud to have led efforts that resulted in positive legislative change, such as my involvement in the Kaylee Sawyer investigation, which contributed to the passage of Kaylee's Law. I have also been privileged to instruct and mentor law enforcement professionals across Oregon, helping to elevate standards of training, preparedness, and service.

If entrusted with the responsibility of Sheriff, I will continue to build upon our agency's core values—restoring trust, fostering accountability, empowering staff, and working collaboratively to ensure public safety for every resident of Deschutes County.

Thank you for your consideration of my application. I welcome the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications and vision for our Sheriff's Office. Please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Respectfully,

James McLaughlin

Interim Sheriff, Deschutes County Sheriff's Office

Core Values and Strategic Plan

1. Partnerships and Public Engagement

We will continue to reduce crime's impact through lasting partnerships with our community, addressing both local and regional concerns to improve public safety. By embracing modern technology – such as apps, survey, social media, and website updates – we will actively engage citizens, giving them a voice in shaping the future of Deschutes County.

Our proactive community policing units, including CATT, Street Crimes, CODE, and the Bend/Redmond Police SCUs, will work collaboratively to create intelligence-based solutions. Enhancing the quality of life requires close cooperations not just within law enforcement but with a broader network of partner agencies.

2. Accountability

Transparency will be central in everything we do – whether it’s in our financial practices, treatment of citizens, the resources we utilize, or the care we provide to those entrusted to us.

We've already made strides in reducing costs without compromising operational readiness. This year, both the Detective Division and SWAT reduced overhead costs, and I played an active role in streamlining these budgets. We will continue to identify-cost-saving opportunities within our divisions while simultaneously strengthening our reserves to be prepared for future, unforeseen expenses.

Positive culture change does not require a large financial investment – it thrives through effective leadership, a clear vision, and a foundation of trust. Building that culture, and nurturing it, ultimately saves us money while strengthening our agency.

3. Culture of Belonging and Empowerment

Our strength lies in the people we serve and those who serve within our agency. As we grow, we must focus on cultivating stability in leadership to create an environment where both sworn and non-sworn staff can thrive. Though we've made progress, the instability we've experienced needs to be addressed with thoughtful, lasting solutions.

I am committed to creating a culture of belonging where every team member is empowered and valued. This focus is reflected in my approach to leadership, as outlined in the attached memo, "Building a Culture of Belonging." We will continue to foster a trusting internal environment that, in turn, sustains public trust.

Empowering our staff – at every rank – to actively contribute to the agency’s growth will create a strong foundation for the future. Additionally, we will continue to develop community engagement programs to ensure we remain connected to the needs and expectations of those we serve.

4. Innovative Training and Development

Training is foundational to our mission. It will be a cornerstone of our success, and guided by a culture of peer-driven learning and leadership development. Leaders will help identify learning opportunities for their teammates, while also recognizing each deputy's strengths and areas of growth. This approach has already delivered impressive results within our Detective, Patrol, and SWAT teams.

Through our training and development, we will foster a culture where “everyone is empowered,” encouraging innovation and creative problem-solving. This mindset will allow us to utilize available tools and tactics to enhance our service to the growing community.

Critical Incident Management training will be pivotal in ensuring that our staff is prepared for the most challenging situations. Rather than relying on “rising to the occasion,” we will equip our team with the skills to fall back on in times of crisis, ensuring a professional and proficient response every time.

We will incorporate formal debriefs focusing on accountability, utilizing a bottom-up model. These debriefs will be clear, actionable, and will provide a path forward as we continually improve our operations and move closer to fulfilling our mission.

5. Enhanced Capabilities

Our goal is to expand the reach of our nationally recognized units:

- Digital Forensics
- ICAC (Crimes Against Children)

By aligning them with proactive teams and leveraging multi-jurisdictional models, we deliver higher service levels with minimal added cost. I have successfully implemented this strategic approach throughout my career.