

Marin City issue faces McGlashan

Monday, April 25, 2005 - MARIN SUPERVISOR Charles McGlashan got his welcome to what may be the most vexing issue facing his district - the relationship between Marin City and the county Sheriff's Department.

It took center stage at the Board of Supervisors' meeting Tuesday when 10 people stepped up to the microphone to criticize sheriff's deputies for their handling of a pre-dawn incident on April 3, when authorities arrived to break up a loud party and it grew into a melee.

It's not the first time such a clash has occurred. That does not mean that these incidents should be accepted as some sort of unfortunate norm.

McGlashan, who has been in office for a little more than 100 days, said he hopes to start a dialogue between Marin City residents and the sheriff's office. That's a good start.

Sheriff Robert Doyle, a veteran Marin lawman who used to serve in Marin City, said he will participate.

He's seen such confrontations as occurred on April 3 before. He has steadfastly defended his deputies' handling of the April 3 incident, but says he wants to meet with residents.

It is time for Marin City residents to help define the level of service they expect from the county.

It is also time for Marin City residents to publicly criticize incidents where bottle, rocks and epithets are being thrown at officers trying to do their jobs.

It is doubtful that residents want such melees to occur on their community's streets.

The arrest of a Marin City woman on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon and her release after the Marin district attorney decided not to pursue the felony charge has been at the center of the latest exchange.

Residents who spoke out Tuesday blamed the clash on the officers and said the arrest was an example of police harassment of local residents. Their complaints deserve to be heard.

The woman, Korissa Russell, is asking for a federal investigation. But McGlashan is right, this is a matter that can be solved through local communication.

"I think it is our job," he said.

The word "our" is packed with potential.

McGlashan is charting the right course.

If he can bring together a panel of residents that truly represents the breadth of the Marin City community, he could start building a path toward a more positive relationship between police and residents.

By creating an ongoing dialogue with a panel of community leaders, perhaps police and residents could develop a positive relationship where they both feel they are treated with respect and they work together to protect the peace and safety of the community.

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