

Barkow campaign: Outlines plans to increase agency transparency

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Milwaukee (May 11, 2022) - Brian Barkow, Democratic candidate for Milwaukee County Sheriff, today outlined key aspects of his strategy to increase agency transparency. Barkow's strategies would, for the first time in Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office history, formally establish independent accountability mechanisms.

"The public expects the next Milwaukee County Sheriff to lead successful efforts to reduce violent crime, address reckless driving, and improve conditions in the county jail," said Barkow. "These efforts will only be successful if the Sheriff's Office commits itself unapologetically to maximum transparency with the public."

Barkow is the only candidate for sheriff who has released detailed plans to establish a community-wide open-door policy, a community advisory council, and an independent jail ombudsman program, all steps that would make history in the Sheriff's Office and in Milwaukee County government.

Barkow's plans to increase transparency are not isolated measures but are instead aspects of previously-released plans to reduce violent crime, improve jail conditions, and ensure effective administration in the Sheriff's Office. But taken together, they mark a bold agenda that will significantly increase public access and oversight in a manner consistent with national best practices.

- **Commitment One: Open-Door Policy:**As sheriff, Barkow will establish an open-door policy that allows every resident of Milwaukee County to schedule a face-to-face meeting with the elected sheriff, either in-person or virtually. Available meeting times will be posted on the Sheriff's Office website and any individual residing in Milwaukee County will be afforded the opportunity to meet with the sheriff.

- **Commitment Two: Community Advisory Council:** Barkow will establish an eight-to-ten-member Community Advisory Council that includes representatives from the legal, advocacy, policy, faith, and not-for-profit sectors along with retired law enforcement and correctional experts. The Community Advisory Council will be provided with full access to agency operations, data, and documentation and will be empowered to propose policy guidance, review and suggest amendments to existing policies and procedures, offer opinions on agency strategy and operations, and report to the public regarding agency affairs. The Community Advisory Council will also serve to facilitate greater engagement between the Sheriff's Office and community organizations and advance community policing services.
- **Commitment Three: Jail Ombudsman Program:** Barkow will establish a jail ombudsman program that will provide independent oversight and monitoring of jail conditions. To ensure the independence of this program, it will be established as a county-contracted service subject to County Board oversight. Federal and state grant funding will be sought to activate and sustain this program. A competitive bidding process will then be initiated aimed at identifying a not-for-profit organization with legal, policy, and advocacy expertise. The organization selected will provide attorney and/or investigative staff to receive and investigate complaints filed by persons in custody, their family members, and jail employees regarding internal conditions, treatment, and procedural fairness. The ombudsman will be authorized to recommend further investigative action on the part of the Sheriff's Office and also to publicly disclose its findings.