

Intro... Roger Vind & Emma Weisman with Burning Man

Commissioners, DA Shields, Sheriff Allen

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. Over the past two decades Burning Man and Pershing County have shared a common goal in producing a safe and meaningful event for participants, with limited impact to the environment and the community.

This relationship is important to BRC and Burning Man attendees and we are committed to working with the County to address concerns. However, the relationship needs to be based on reasonableness and trust.

I'm here today to express the Burning Man organization's concerns regarding the inaccurate public scoping comments submitted by the District Attorney on behalf of the Pershing County Commission and the District Attorney's Office for Burning Man's next 10-year permit.

Our Black Rock Rangers in no way "filter" information to law enforcement.

In fact there are 57 instances pertaining to law enforcement in the 2018 Black Rock Ranger Manual, and the word "filter" or any other reference to keeping information from law enforcement just does not exist.

Much to the contrary, the manual clearly supports law enforcement's roles and our utilization of law enforcement involvement.

District Attorney Shields suggested crimes at the event, including sexual assault, may have been underreported to law enforcement officers in previous years. This serious allegation is not only untrue, but is contradicted by Sheriff Allen himself.

In an email thread with ME directly and others, Sheriff Allen wrote:

All

I do appreciate the lengths that BRC, with your assistance, has gone through to assist us in our endeavor to provide the best public safety we can.

I realize that the definition (editor added: of sexual assault) you have is specifically for your Rangers and is overly broad.

I also appreciate that you are instructing your Rangers to not inquire about penetration, or start an investigation, but rather to allow for the free flow of information from the potential victim.

My concern is that with such a broad interpretation, we are getting dispatched to calls where someone was kissed, didn't like it, told the perpetrator to stop, which they did and we are still getting it as a Sexual Assault.

In that narrow example, the only potential crime is a battery, but possibly not depending on the circumstances.

I just want to make sure we allocate our limited resources for the best outcome of the participant.

Having read the entirety of this thread, and the entire protocols,

I will attempt to suggest very limited and precise changes from the aspect of a layman and not a Law Enforcement Officer, to alleviate any confusion.

Thanks again.

Jerry

In regard to the District Attorney's claim that the event is a drain on County resources, the County expanded its own role when it became an agent of the BLM in adopting all of its legal cases instead of having the better-financed federal government prosecuting its own cases.

The vast majority of these cases are the result of stopping vehicles for dusty license plates or obscured tail lights on a very dusty dry lake bed.

This results in Pershing County having to employ and compensate an Assistant DA who prosecutes BLM-initiated cases that the US Attorney's Office does not want.

The County also generates revenue from the convictions it secures, not to mention any asset forfeitures the county imposes as a result of arrest and conviction.

We also take issue with the Sheriff's allegations of high levels of crime at the event.

It is just not true and our statistics bear it out.

Utilizing the verified data we have from PCSO and the BLM from 2010 through 2016, the event population grew 58%; however,

person-on-person crime only increased by TWO - from 10 to 12,
and drug citations increased only 34%, which is well below the population increase.

In the years between 2010 and 2016 there was an average of only six person-on-person crimes each year.

We would have had 2017 data, had Sheriff Allen followed through in a timely manner with his After Action Report for the 2017 event. Unfortunately, he delivered it at the late date of July 9, 2018.

However, current available PCSO records indicate there were 12 person-on-person crimes in 2017, the same as in 2016. Please note these crimes were reported by Black Rock Rangers to law enforcement.

The accusation that Burning Man is "filtering" crime reporting is absurd.

With respect to the District Attorney's comments about our Gate screening process: In a state where "everybody has a gun" (as we were told by local law enforcement), there have been only a handful of firearms at the event over the past decade.

When firearms have been found in Black Rock City, they have been confiscated by law enforcement, and the owners were escorted away from the event.

Sheriff Allen repeatedly advocates the event be made 21 and over despite our having demonstrated the event is tremendously safe for children.

We believe parents should be the judge of what's best for their children, not the Sheriff.

Sheriff Allen is entitled to his opinions. However,

anecdotes are not data and repeating untruths does not make them true.

It is unfortunate that misinformation propagated by the Sheriff has made its way into the County's public comment.

We believe it is time for the Sheriff to be held accountable for his misstatements and mischaracterizations of our event.

Lastly, capping the event at 50,000 people does little to address the issues we face now and in the future of the event.