



ERIK NASARENKO District Attorney

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Former Oxnard Police Chief Scott Whitney Named New Chief Of DA Bureau of Investigations

VENTURA, California – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that law enforcement veteran and former Oxnard Police Chief Scott Whitney will lead the District Attorney’s Bureau of Investigation beginning September 13, 2022. Whitney will take over for retiring Chief Investigator Mike Baray, who has led the 68-member department since 2013.

“As police chief of Ventura County’s largest city, Scott was a champion of community policing and neighborhood engagement,” said Nasarenko. “His longtime experience as an agency leader coupled with his deep knowledge of Ventura County and its public safety needs makes him ideally suited to lead the Bureau and expand our community connections.”

In addition to serving as police chief from 2016 to 2020, Whitney has a long track record of public service to Oxnard and its residents, including leadership roles as an interim and assistant city manager, where he oversaw complex budgets and managed multiple city departments. His nearly five years as police chief were marked by significant reductions in crime, the promotion of Oxnard’s first two female police commanders, and new partnerships with community organizations, including neighborhood councils, faith-based groups, and school officials.

Jason Benites, who climbed the ranks with Whitney and succeeded him as Oxnard’s Police Chief, stated: “After working alongside Chief Whitney for almost 30 years, I saw firsthand his commitment to crime reduction, community policing and organizational engagement. The Bureau of Investigation and the County of Ventura are in solid hands under his leadership.”

Former Thousand Oaks Police Chief Tim Hagel, who served with Whitney as police chief of Ventura County’s second largest city, praised the selection. “He is universally respected throughout the county and someone who can walk into any police briefing or town hall meeting and make a meaningful and

positive impact,” said Hagel. “His emotional intelligence, command experience and willingness to foster change while retaining the best in police practices will be tremendous assets to the district attorney’s office and Ventura County residents.”

In his 31 years with the Oxnard Police Department, Whitney served in a wide array of leadership roles. He led all three department bureaus, including Investigations, Administration and Patrol Services. As a commander, he ran the Special Operations Division, which included the SWAT Team, the Violent Crimes Task Force, the Special Enforcement Unit, as well as the K9 Unit and Firearms Training. Whitney was an advocate for vulnerable populations and was instrumental in initiating programs to de-escalate police-civilian encounters. He was one of the founders of the Ventura County Crisis Intervention Team (CIT).

“I’ve worked closely with the Ventura County District Attorney’s Office for three decades and I have the highest regard for the excellent work that they do,” said Whitney. “I appreciate the strong culture of prosecutorial support within the Bureau of Investigation and their deep commitment to keeping our communities safe. I am excited to maintain that proud tradition while also identifying new opportunities for crime reduction and community collaboration. It will be my great honor to take the reins and lead the outstanding men and women of the Bureau.”

In addition to providing intensive support for prosecutors both before and during jury trials, the Bureau of Investigation’s 55 sworn peace officers and 13 civilian personnel conduct investigations in a number of complex areas, including real estate, automobile and workers’ compensation fraud cases. The department also possesses specialized expertise in tackling financial and internet-based crimes, including multi-jurisdiction child pornography and human trafficking investigations.

A Ventura County native who graduated from Oxnard High School, Whitney attended the University of Oregon on a football scholarship. As a scholar athlete, he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration, with an emphasis in Finance and Accounting. He holds a Master of Public Administration from California State University Northridge and resides in Camarillo.

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The Ventura County District Attorney’s Office is the public prosecutor for the county’s 850,000 residents. The office employs approximately 290 employees including attorneys, investigators, victim advocates, and professional support staff who strive to seek justice, ensure public safety, and protect the rights of crime victims.