

(Letter to Editor) Dartmouth resident: “Bristol County needs Paul Heroux for Sheriff!”

“To the editor:

Recent letters to the editor from Jonathan Darling, Sheriff Thomas Hodgson’s media guy, fondly describe a long-standing and warm relationship between the two, but there is little to recommend the Sheriff’s continued employment by Bristol County taxpayers.

I don’t care if what Hodgson the True Believer says at a lunch counter is precisely what he says on Fox News, at Christian nationalist events, or on far-right talk radio. Mr. Darling may paint Hodgson as a purveyor of Big Ideas but there isn’t an idea that Hodgson mouths that hasn’t been scripted for him by the Federation for American Immigration Reform or the Center for Immigration Studies – both recognized hate groups – or some other rightwing lobby.



Paul Heroux Facebook photo.

For all of Hodgson's micromanagement of coffee and shovels which Darling points to as saving taxpayer money, Hodgson has nevertheless managed to waste hundreds of thousands of hours and taxpayer dollars nurturing connections with white supremacists, militia groups, sovereign citizens, and his pals at the Constitutional Sheriff's and Police Officer's Association (CSP0A), a far right group that thinks sheriffs have the right to interpret the Constitution for themselves. Since roughly 2011 the sheriff has been rubbing elbows with groups with neo-nazi and Identitarian members, such as the

American Border Foundation, which was crowdfunding Trump's wall and still hasn't accounted for its donations. And Hodgson's latest project, Protect America Now, is led by eight sheriffs, several of whom belong to the Oath Keepers.

The gushing letters which Mr. Darling has written make no mention of the abuses of prisoners that courts have called unconstitutional, the filthy conditions under which inmates are warehoused, the practically non-existent rehabilitation, or Hodgson's own participation in tear-gassing prisoners – a stunt which led the Department of Homeland Security to take away Hodgson's prized ICE 287(g) program – the same program the state auditor found that Hodgson was likely undercharging ICE for at taxpayer expense, and the same program whose receipts were carelessly deposited in a slush fund instead of being remitted to the state Comptroller.

Hodgson and Darling may claim that nobody really knows what goes on in the jail. And that may well be. Hodgson refuses to open up the jail to just anyone for a complete inspection. He even barred state senator Sonia Chang-Diaz from entering – a violation of state law granting representatives access to jails and prisons.



Paul Heroux Facebook photo.

But some of Hodgson's former employees can tell you what's

what. His is a jail with extremely high turnover, and abusing prisoners is not for everybody. On July 9th a former Corrections Officer wrote the Fall River Reporter that "there are many things that happened behind the scenes, some illegal, that were never brought to light as to avoid negative publicity. Just a few to highlight are corrupt officers delivering dangerous contraband and drugs to inmates. [...] There were also several assaults in the facility (on inmates, and between officers) that should be responsibly reported to the community."

If this is new information, voters might recall that two of Hodgson's officers were involved in a money laundering scheme for Carlos "Codfather" Rafael, and that Rafael boasted of asking Hodgson to appoint one of them to a position with DHS clearance that could be used to advantage. Hodgson doesn't deny Rafael's phone call or promoting the money launderer.

Despite all Hodgson's far-right distractions, zealotry, and cruelty, Bristol County still has among the highest recidivism rates in the state and prisoners just keep returning to lockup. Hodgson's campaign slogan, "Jail is not a country club," might be a catchy one for some voters, but a slogan is no replacement for doing the one thing a Massachusetts sheriff is responsible for – rehabilitating prisoners.

After 25 years of scandals and controversies, Bristol County is sick and tired of this sheriff. It's time to replace Hodgson with someone who has both the training and the desire to turn his dysfunctional operation around.

On September 6th, and again on November 2nd, vote for Paul Heroux for Bristol County Sheriff.

David Ehrens Dartmouth, MA."