

# 3 Men – 1 Position

## The Three Candidates for Chief of Police

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San Angeloans hold that unique title of being the only remaining city in Texas which actually allows the citizens to elect their Chief of Police instead of handing that power over to their City Council. Personally, I am so glad we still hold on to that privilege.

One of the challenges in today's society, especially in politics, is the "Good Ole Boy" club and small-town way of voting people into office. We tend to vote for people because we know them, go to church with them, or who's related to them, the favors they could do for us, and having met them at a function they seemed "real nice." Someone being nice has absolutely nothing to do with them being the best person for the position they are running for or that being a standard of qualification for the job. Yet – I have watched people vote this way over and over again. Yeppers! Voters feed the good ole boy way of doing politics.

Eight years ago, I was very involved in the Chief of Police race. This year, working out of town and out of state, I was suddenly made aware of the race at hand and the candidates who were in the race. John (my husband) and I suddenly realized we were a split ticket household. We both knew Hernandez and Griffith, and neither of us knew Cimino. As I inquired of friends who were attending the various forums for the candidates, I learned quickly that Cimino was also an impressive candidate.

I reached out to the three of them and asked for an interview. I decided the only way to really compare one to another was to ask each of them the same questions. We have three men who each bring something unique to the table. The questions I posed to the candidates once answered by each of them, helped me and my husband find the clarification we needed as to where we will be

throwing our support. All three are Christians, one being a Messianic Jew. All three are strong family men. All three love the work they do as officers. But only one man can hold the position.

For those of you who want the short version, I hope to provide that for you with this article. I will present each question asked of them, and then post a brief synopsis of their answer. I am also attaching all three video interviews for you to watch in their entirety – uncut – unedited too. Those links are at the end of the article. You will get an excellent feel of each of these officers in listening to them.

Note: As I worked this article, I had all three videos up, one officer on each tab. I literally took one question at a time and then listened to each of them answer that one question. At least to me, that was very impactful. I have inserted with their answers the video time marks if you need to hear more. While I only took the meat of their answer to the question I asked, several of them gave some excellent information additionally and I encourage you to listen to each of their interviews.

Thank you to Freedom Fellowship for allowing me to use one of their prayer rooms for the interviews. Thank you to each of the officers for making time in their day to come in, including Sgt. Griffith who had been/was sick.

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Here is the wording from my notes and questions I asked of them. I apparently interviewed them in alphabetical order by last names (Cimino, Griffith, and Hernandez). I will keep that order in posting their replies to the questions.

**THE INTERVIEW:**

As I will share with each of you – I am asking the exact same question of each of you. If your response prompts a follow up question or further clarification, I may do exactly that. I do have one unique question for each of you based on information I heard from others talking about the various forums they attended – and I missed. What they said or commented on, left me curious for more info.

Let's get started.

*What motivated you to throw your hat in the ring and put yourself out there as a candidate for the Chief of Police for San Angelo, Texas?*

Cimino – We could do better (training, communicating, brotherhood, and experience as an officer being balanced better). [1:00-2:35]

Griffith – I've always wanted to make it better (whatever department I was assigned to, helping other officers, creating a team mindset). [1:10-2:22]

Hernandez – I ran in 2016. Six months ago, Chief Carter called me and let me know he was retiring and asked if I was going to run again. [1:06-2:04]

We have the former Chief of Police in prison. That in itself shouts that there must have been lots of issues and problems going on behind closed doors in the department when he was in charge. In talking with various officers, listening to things which have been said publicly during salary negotiations, it's obvious there are some morale issues and other staffing challenges. *What are some of the key internal issues that are important to you to address and improve?*

Cimino – Chain of Command. [2:35-4:06]

Griffith – Getting back to our purpose, not us versus them, but more community minded service. [2:23-4:39]

Hernandez – Bringing back pride through improved discipline and training which leads to better recruitment and retention. [2:05-4:05]

San Angelo is not an island. Sadly, it is directly impacted by many state and national issues. One in particular that isn't being addressed openly yet in our community, is the crime challenges that are happening due to the illegal aliens who have plowed through our open border just south of us. Traveling the state with my work, I see the horrors, hear the chatter of citizens, and visibly witness the apparent illegals wandering around on the streets, walking the highways, sleeping in doorways, and trashing our once beautiful state. *What are*

*you seeing here in San Angelo and how do you intend to address this growing crisis?*

Cimino – The homeless numbers have increased. We are limited and can only follow the laws on the books. [4:07-6:23]

Griffith – San Angelo is off the beaten path – we are not seeing the same issues as other cities. We do see more drugs – drug prices are down right now. We have to look at the terrorism aspect – or a mass casualty situation. The federal government has us left us high and dry. Plus, Senate Bill 4 – waiting to hear on it and the needed training it will present. [4:40-9:18]

Hernandez – San Angelo is off the beaten path – we are short on officers and priority is homicide trials. [4:06-7:25]

The Mexican cartels are actively working on the Texas side of the border today. *How active are the cartels in San Angelo today?*

Cimino – They are more active than the citizens know. [6:24-6:49]

Griffith – They are here. I would like to develop a task force, team up so the various agencies can work together on this. [9:20-10:18]

Hernandez – They are active. Not as bad as the big cities. We know all of the criminals here in town. [7:26-9:27]

*Do you feel that the citizens of San Angelo need to be better informed about the crime issues in our community directly from the SAPD versus news media outlets who just want a good story “that if it bleeds, it leads” as they say?*

Cimino – Yes 100%. The news media doesn't get it. I posted to my Facebook the website links to the DPS and FBI reports we send them. [6:50-7:55]

Griffith – Yes – we need transparency with the public. This is one of the reasons for the Chief's Advisory Board I want to create – two-way communication to build our community. [10:19-14:12]

Hernandez – Yes ma'am. We have to be careful about transparency though. [9:28-11:16]

Politics tend to bring out the “good ole boy” way of doing things. Many people today are exhausted with seeing this and ready for this to be done away with. *Do you see this in the department, and if so, how will you address this?*

Cimino – The department is ripe for the good ole boy system and it has been since before I arrived. We see good officers being passed over for friends instead. [7:56-9:32]

Griffith – I've never been a part of one. Sometimes the right thing to do is the hard thing to do – but it's the right thing. We need to look for the highest qualified person. [14:12-16:45]

Hernandez – The good ole' boy system in general or what? I'm not one. When I first arrived at the department, I was the first Hernandez. Now we have six and I'm related to two of them. [11:17-13:20]

*Would you want to get the citizens more involved with crime awareness, reporting crime, and possibly even fighting crime? And if so, how would you envision this happening?*

Cimino – Yes, 400%. They need to be more informed. We need to get different groups involved from different areas of town to share information. [9:36-11:31]

Griffith – Yes. The Chief's Advisory Board fits in this in. The police need to be looking for issues in their city and not just responding. We need better follow up and support. [16:45-19:42]

Hernandez – Maybe to an extent, not fighting crime though, that's a liability. Citizens can help fill a gap where we are short on officers. [13:21-14:59]

*Is the San Angelo Police Department staying up to date with today's fast developing technology? If not, is this an issue that needs to be addressed and how would you do it?*

Cimino – Pretty good. We got a drone team. I think some things cross the line and that’s concerning. [11:32-12:19]

Griffith – No – we are not. Identity crime is on the rise and the illegal seven plus million people who cannot work in the country are going to be a concern. Technology can help fight crime. [19:42-22:32]

Hernandez – I would love to visit with the city officials to talk about technology. [15:00-16:38]

*Gangs, violence, and copy-cat crimes that are seen on social media – how much of this type of thing do we have going on here in San Angelo?*

Cimino – We get a lot of swatting calls and other things that circle into here. [12:20-12:55]

Griffith – We have a gang unit – good guys – losing one of them. The gangs aren’t as bad now as they were. Today they are more drug based. Would like a task force and to work with agencies to address this and programs for students. [22:33-28:40]

Hernandez – We’ve had some. Not too much copy-cat. [16:39-17:58]

The violence we are seeing on TV today that is happening around our country is beyond anything we would have dreamed of 30 – 40 – 50 years ago. *What are the key crime issues we are dealing with locally? How do we need to redirect things – work with the youth today – to begin to set a new and better direction for our society tomorrow?*

Cimino – Everything boils down to drugs: thefts, burglary, etc. [12:56-15:28]

Griffith – We need real interactions on the streets. Griffith shares a story about Armando and how he could have an impact on today’s youth. [28:41-32:40]

Hernandez – Family violence is up. Burglaries of buildings. I spent about 25 years on school campuses, we need to continue that. [17:59-20:11]

Changing of the guard is always a challenging situation. *Do you plan to keep any of the current Assistant Chiefs in place and if so, who and why? What do they bring to the table that you feel is critical for your administration or do you feel a clean slate is better?*

Cimino – Clean slate. [15:29-16:08]

Griffith – Tough question. I have not told anyone anything, even those who are helping me with my race. [32:41-35:03]

Hernandez – Is this a question someone told you to ask? Hernandez shares a story from his 2016 race involving then Lt. Frank Carter. [20:12-24:20]

To tag onto this question – *will these officers be given respectable positions to move into?*

Cimino – They will remain a Lieutenant and go back to where they were before. [16:09-16:44]

Griffith – No one should be in fear of punishment. We have to unite. Most do retire. [35:04-37:08]

Hernandez – It's their choice to remain as a Senior Lieutenant or retire. [24:20-25:34]

*What do you want the citizens of San Angelo to understand about the changes that are needed in the San Angelo Police Department?*

Cimino – It's all on my website: [ciminoforchief.com](http://ciminoforchief.com). Go look. Things will change under my leadership. [16:45-19:41]

Griffith – There will be changes. There will be more press conferences. Citizens need to know more to understand the needs. [37:09-39:35]

Hernandez – Never settle for status quo. [25:35-26:50]

## Unique Questions -

Chris - Someone mentioned you were talking about mandatory rotations for detectives. I saw you addressed this on your website too. *For those who have not read through your website, can you address this change you want to implement and how it would impact the department?*

*It's meant to fix the issues we are dealing with. [19:41-23:02]*

Travis - Tell me more about the citizen committee you are interested in putting together and what you hope to achieve with it.

*To actively engage people who care about our community, who want to be advocates for various kinds of groups, also including various people from departments and government agencies, to discuss and hear about issues. [39:35-44:08]*

Mike - In one of the forums you commented that you have been shot at eleven times, is what I was told. That rattled me a bit that our officers are taking on fire that often. *Can you give me more details on when or what prompted those situations?*

*Being on specialized units, mostly SWAT, along with 33 years of service. [26:51-29:48]*

In closing - *Any closing thoughts or comments you'd like to share?*

Cimino - Vote, know all three candidates, read the websites, be informed, then decide which one represents you best. [23:03-24:08]

Griffith - Going door to door and hearing the support from our community has been awesome. We need to put time and energy into the next generation. [44:09-47:51]

Hernandez - Every unit I've led, I've put together great teams. I lead by example. [29:49-32:20]



I cannot encourage you enough to quietly listen to each of these three interviews and really focus on what each of them are saying. Two of them seem to have great ideas they want to bring to the table. One expressed hesitancy in some areas. One gives a sense of his focus being on the officers, one connecting the department better with the community in which it serves. One might be showing a bit of the good ole boy type of operation. One seems to be well versed in things that are going to impact our community in the coming days and already thinking ahead as to how to deal with the issues it will present.

Three interviews are there for you to listen to in their entirety. You will walk away with a better awareness of what is happening in our community and within our police department. It is surely time for change in numerous ways. We need a full-time Chief of Police who will stay on top of what is, will be, and what could be impacting our community and getting our police force prepared to handle it.

May the good Lord help us to elect the best man for this position.

The video links:

Lt. Chris Cimino <https://youtu.be/zaOSXkUiFqo>

Sgt. Travis Griffith <https://youtu.be/8wyrH1p8vUc>

Lt. Mike Hernandez [https://youtu.be/CGtp\\_5yYnY4](https://youtu.be/CGtp_5yYnY4)