SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT DENNIS J. HERRERA, State Bar #139669 1 City Attorney 2012 APR 23 PM 3: 54 JESSE C. SMITH, State Bar #122517 Chief Assistant City Attorney CLERK OF THE COURT SHERRI SOKELAND KAISER, State Bar #197986 3 PETER J. KEITH, State Bar #206482 DEPUTY CLERK Deputy City Attorneys 4 1390 Market Street, Suite 700 San Francisco, California 94102-5408 5 (415) 554-3886 (Kaiser) Telephone: (415) 554-3908 (Keith) Telephone: 6 Facsimile: (415) 554-6747 E-Mail: sherri.kaiser@sfgov.org 7 peter.keith@sfgov.org 8 Attorneys for Third-Party Movant CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO 9 10 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA 11 COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO 12 THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF Court No. 12001311 13 CALIFORNIA, THIRD-PARTY MOVANT CITY AND 14 COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO'S Plaintiff, MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND 15 **AUTHORITIES IN SUPPORT OF MOTION** vs. FOR RELEASE OF COURT RECORD 16 ROSS MIRKARIMI, Hearing Date: May 8, 2012 17 Hon. Garrett Wong Defendant. Hearing Judge: Time: 1:30 p.m. 18 Place: Department 15, 850 Bryant 19 20 CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN 21 FRANCISCO, 22 Third-Party Movant. 23 24 25 26 27

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#### RELIEF REQUESTED

Third-party movant City and County of San Francisco ("San Francisco") moves for an order from this Court releasing a court record to San Francisco: namely, the videotaped statement of the victim in this action, Ms. L. Alternatively, if the Court no longer has actual possession of this record, the Court should authorize the seizing agency (the San Francisco Police Department), the District Attorney, and the Defendant to release the record to San Francisco for copying.

#### INTRODUCTION

This criminal action against Defendant Ross Mirkarimi arose from an incident of domestic violence that occurred on December 31, 2011. On January 4, 2012, officers of the San Francisco Police Department initiated an investigation. The officers obtained a search warrant from the Court, and executed the warrant, seizing a video recording of the statement of Defendant's wife (Ms. L.) that also depicts an injury caused by Defendant's violent act. On January 13, 2012, the People initiated a criminal complaint against Defendant and charged him with three violations of the California Penal Code: (1) section 273.5(a), for unlawfully inflicting a corporal injury on his wife; (2) section 273a(b), for endangering the person and health of his two-year-old son; and (3) section 136.1(b)(1), for attempting to prevent and dissuade his wife from making a report of the incident to law enforcement.

During pendency of this action, Ms. L. made a claim of attorney-client privilege with regard to the videotape. This Court rejected the claim of privilege, but did order the parties not to distribute the video, in order to avoid affecting the jury pool. There was, however, no trial. Rather, on March 12, 2012, pursuant to a plea agreement, Defendant entered a plea of guilty to false imprisonment of Ms. L. in violation of Penal Code section 236 and the remainder of the charges were dismissed. On March 19, 2012, Defendant was formally sentenced.

The Court retains jurisdiction to hear motions for release of evidence to third parties. Good cause exists to release a copy of the videotaped statement to San Francisco, for two reasons. First, the videotaped statement is a Court record and a public document that should be released. Second, release of the videotaped statement would serve a substantial public interest. Official proceedings are pending to remove Defendant from the office of Sheriff of the City and County of San Francisco, based on

Defendant's official misconduct including his conduct giving rise to this criminal action. The videotaped statement is valuable evidence of that conduct. There is a compelling public interest in the tribunal considering all evidence in its official proceedings on this important question whether to remove an elected official from office. And there is no valid reason not to release this videotaped statement. The jury pool is no longer a concern, and the Court has already ruled that there is no valid claim of privilege.

#### FACTUAL BACKGROUND

#### I. MS. L.'S VIDEOTAPED STATEMENT

On January 4, 2012, the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) initiated a criminal investigation of Defendant's December 31, 2011 act of domestic violence. The SFPD sought and obtained a search warrant from the Court, and seized a video camera, including images recorded on that camera. (Return to Search Warrant No. 120009457 (Jan. 5, 2012).) Included in the images seized was a video recording of the statement of the victim in this action, Ms. L., which was recorded by her neighbor, Ivory Madison. (Affidavit of Inspector John Keane in Support of Search Warrant (Jan. 4, 2012).) In that videotaped statement, Ms. L. describes a physical injury caused by the Defendant. (*Ibid.*)

On January 30, 2012, the People moved for an order from this Court permitting admission of the videotape into evidence at trial pursuant to Evidence Code section 1240 and 1250. (Notice of Motion and Motion to Admit Statements Pursuant to Evidence Code Section 1240 and 1250 (Jan. 30, 2012).) The Defendant filed a written opposition to that motion. (Defendant Ross Mirkarimi's Opposition to Prosecution's Motion to Admit Statements Pursuant to Evidence Code Section 1240 and 1250 (Feb. 22, 2012).) On February 27, 2012, at a hearing in which the People and Defendant presented oral argument, this Court noted that it had reviewed the videotape, and, based on that review, found the statement to be a spontaneous declaration, and therefore, admissible at trial pursuant

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to Evidence Code section 1240. (Reporter's Transcript (RT) 22:4-9, 29:17-21 (Feb. 27, 2012) [see Exhibit 1 to Declaration of Peter J. Keith (Keith Declaration) attached to this motion].)<sup>1</sup>

On February 24, 2012, Ms. L. filed a Notice of Claim of Privilege pursuant to Evidence Code section 954, in which she claimed that all statements made to Ivory Madison, including all statements in the videotape, were confidential attorney-client communications and therefore, barred from disclosure. (Notice of Claim of Privilege Pursuant to Evidence Code § 954 (Feb. 24, 2012).) On February 27, 2012, Ms. L. asked this Court for an order imposing sanctions on the San Francisco District Attorney's Office on the grounds that dissemination of still photographs taken from the videotape and a transcript of the audio portion of the videotape violated her right to privacy. (Ms. L.'s Notice of Motion and Motion for Sanctions Against the San Francisco District Attorney's Office for Violating Ms. L.'s Constitutional Right to Privacy (Cal.Const. Art. I § 28(b)(1)) (Feb. 27, 2012).) The request for sanctions was based on the SFDA's attachment of the still photographs and transcript to their Reply Brief. (See Reply Brief to Defendant's Opposition to Admit Statements Pursuant to Evidence Code Section 1240, Exhibits 5-13 (Feb. 24, 2012).) At the February 29, 2012 hearing before this Court, this Court noted that it had before it the motions relating to privilege and the right to privacy. (RT 4:1-8 (Feb. 29, 2012) [see Keith Declaration Exh. 2].) After hearing argument from the People and counsel for Ms. L., this Court held that the videotape would be admissible at trial. (RT 25:5-17 (Feb. 29, 2012).)

With regard to public dissemination of the video, the Court ordered that "[t]he video is still going to be ordered not to be released to the media yet, because on Friday we have a jury that's going to come in. And I've got to make sure that both sides have a fair and impartial jury in this case." (RT 45:18-22 (Feb. 29, 2012).)

Following this Court's ruling that the videotape would be admissible at trial, Ms. L. then petitioned the Appellate Division of this Court for a writ of mandate or other appropriate relief, specifically requesting an order prohibiting Ms. Madison from disclosing her communications with

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Although the Court held that the "statements" were admissible, it is clear from both the context of this Court's ruling and the earlier comments of counsel that this Court's ruling was meant to apply to admission of the videotape. (RT 9:18-19 (Feb. 27, 2012).)

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Ms. L., including the videotape. (Petition for Writ of Mandate or Other Appropriate Relief (Mar. 2, 2012).) On March 9, 2012, the Appellate Division of this Court denied that petition. (Order Denying Petition for Writ of Mandate or Other Appropriate Relief (Mar. 9, 2012) [see Keith Declaration Exh. 3].)

#### II. DISPOSITION OF THE CRIMINAL ACTION AND DISPOSITION OF EVIDENCE

On March 19, 2012, the Court pronounced judgment and sentence in this action. (RT 3:17-18 (March 19, 2012) [see Keith Declaration Exh. 4].) Defendant entered a plea of guilty to false imprisonment of Ms. L. in violation of Penal Code section 236 and the remainder of the charges were dismissed. Defendant was sentenced to a day in jail, three years of probation, a fine, community service, and counseling. At the close of that proceeding, the Court released to the parties all exhibits entered into evidence or lodged with the Court. (RT 5:12-22 (Mar. 19, 2012).)

## III. THE PENDING PROCEEDINGS TO REMOVE DEFENDANT FROM THE OFFICE OF SHERIFF, AND THE CITY ATTORNEY'S INVESTIGATION OF MISCONDUCT

The Charter of the City and County of San Francisco vests the Mayor, the City's chief executive, with the power to suspend and charge an elected officer for official misconduct. Under the Charter, an elected officer charged with official misconduct receives a hearing before the Ethics Commission, and the accused officer may be represented by counsel. The Ethics Commission forwards the "full record" of the hearing to the Board of Supervisors and makes a recommendation whether, in its view, the charges should be sustained. The Board then must consider that full record and vote whether to sustain the charges. The accused officer will be removed if nine or more of the Board members vote to sustain. (S.F. Charter § 15.105 [see Keith Declaration Exh. 5].) This process is mandated by the San Francisco Charter under the authority of the California Constitution, which grants a charter city the power to provide for "the manner in which, the method by which, the times at

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In 1995, the voters added the current definition of the term "official misconduct: "Official misconduct means any wrongful behavior by a public officer in relation to the duties of his or her office, willful in its character, including any failure, refusal or neglect of an officer to perform any duty enjoined on him or her by law, or conduct that falls below the standard of decency, good faith and right action impliedly required of all public officers and including any violation of a specific conflict of interest or governmental ethics law. When any City law provides that a violation of the law constitutes or is deemed official misconduct, the conduct is covered by this definition and may subject the person to discipline and/or removal from office." (S.F. Charter § 15.105(e).)

which, and the terms for which the several municipal officers and employees whose compensation is paid by the city shall be elected or appointed, and for their removal, and for their compensation." (Cal. Const. art. XI, § 5(b).)

On March 21, 2012, the Mayor of San Francisco initiated official misconduct proceedings to suspend and remove Defendant from the office of Sheriff of the City and County of San Francisco. The Mayor suspended Defendant effective immediately, served Defendant with written charges of official misconduct, and transmitted the charges to the San Francisco Ethics Commission and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. (Charges [see Keith Declaration Exh. 6].) The Charges alleged, among other things, that: On or about December 31, 2011, during a domestic dispute, Defendant physically assaulted his wife, Ms. L., grabbing her with such force that he bruised her upper right arm. (Charges ¶ 16.) Defendant also restrained Ms. L. and violated her personal liberty. (Id. ¶ 17.) Defendant also attempted to dissuade witnesses from talking to the police about this incident, encouraged witnesses to lie to the police, and asked a witness to destroy the videotaped statement of Ms. L. Defendant did so through intermediaries and by telephone. (Id. ¶ 22.) This conduct and other conduct by Defendant was official misconduct. (Id. ¶ 30-31.)

The City Attorney is investigating Defendant's acts. Here, the City Attorney has officially requested that Defendant provide the records received in criminal discovery in this action – a request that would include all three pieces of evidence sought by this motion. (Letter of April 16, 2012 [see Keith Declaration Exh. 7].) Defendant has a duty to cooperate with the City Attorney. Section 3.240(b) of the San Francisco Campaign and Governmental Conduct Code provides: "Duty to Cooperate and Assist. The Ethics Commission, District Attorney or City Attorney may request and shall receive from every City officer and employee cooperation and assistance with an investigation into an alleged violation of this Chapter." As of the filing of this motion, Defendant has not provided these records and has not committed to provide these records. (Keith Declaration ¶ \_\_\_\_\_.)

The seizing agency (the San Francisco Police Department), the District Attorney, and the Defendant have copies of the videotaped statement. The SFPD holds this videotape for the Court. Penal Code § 1536. The District Attorney will not release this evidence without a court order

authorizing it to do so. And Defendant has not provided this evidence to the City Attorney, notwithstanding his duty to cooperate and assist with the City Attorney's investigation of the allegations of misconduct. (*Ibid.*) Therefore, San Francisco is making the present motion.

#### **DISCUSSION**

# I. BECAUSE THE SAN FRANCISCO POLICE DEPARTMENT SEIZED THE VIDEOTAPE PURSUANT TO A WARRANT ISSUED BY THIS COURT, THIS COURT HAS THE INHERENT POWER TO ORDER ITS RELEASE OR DISCLOSURE.

Items seized pursuant to a warrant are in the constructive possession of the court that authorized the seizure regardless of whether in the physical possession of the police or district attorney. (*People v. Super. Ct. (Loar)* (1972) 28 Cal.App.3d 600, 608; *Oziel v. Super. Ct. (CBS, Inc.)* (1990) 223 Cal.App.3d 1284, 1293.) Penal Code section 1536 empowers a court in constructive possession of seized items to entertain nonstatutory motions for the return or release of seized items whether or not those items were introduced into evidence. (Pen. Code § 1536; see *People v. Super. Ct. (Loar)*, *supra*, 28 Cal.App.3d at p. 609.) Moreover, this power survives the close of the underlying criminal case. (*Id.* at p. 608.)

As set forth above, SFPD seized the videotape pursuant to the January 4, 2012 warrant issued by this Court. To the extent that the Court no longer has the videotape because it has returned it to the seizing officers or the District Attorney, they hold the videotape on behalf of this Court. Therefore, this Court may entertain nonstatutory motions for its release or disclosure.

## II. THE VIDEOTAPED STATEMENT OF MS. L. IS PART OF THIS COURT'S RECORD TO WHICH THE PUBLIC HAS A FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHT OF ACCESS

Exhibits, whether admitted into evidence, refused, or lodged with the court, are part of the court record. (Cal. Rules of Court, Rule 2.550(b)(1) and Rule 8.320(e); see also *Baugess v. Webster Paine* (1978) 22 Cal.3d 626, 637, fn. 6, superseded by statute on other grounds.) Unless the law requires confidentiality and/or the records are sealed based on an "overriding interest" that overcomes the right of public access, court records are presumed to be open to the public. (Cal. Rules of Court, Rule 2.550; see Advisory Committee Comment to Cal. Rules of Court, Rule 2.550 [recognizing a First Amendment right of access to court records used at trial or as a basis of adjudication]; see generally

Press-Enterprise Co. v. Super. Ct. (1986) 478 U.S. 1, 9; NBC Subsidiary v. Super. Ct. (1999) 20 Cal.4th 1178, 1181-1209; Copley Press v. Super. Ct. (1992) 6 Cal.App.4th 106, 111 [finding that First Amendment provides "broad access rights to judicial hearings and records"].) Examples of confidential records to which public access is restricted by law include records of family courts (Cal. Fam. Code § 1818(b)), in forma pauperis applications (Cal. Rules of Ct., Rule 3.54, 8.26), and under certain circumstances, search warrant affidavits. (See Advisory Committee Comment to Cal. Rules of Ct., Rule 2.550.) Examples of "overriding interests" found to support sealing a record include statutory privileges and privacy. (Ibid., relying on NBC Subsidiary v. Super. Ct. at p. 1222, fn. 46.) Any order to seal court records, however, requires express factual findings, including a finding that an "overriding interest supports sealing the record[.]" (Cal. Rules of Ct., Rule 2.550(d)(2).)

Here, the videotape, which remains in the constructive possession of this Court, was an exhibit that this Court reviewed in adjudicating the motions to exclude the videotape. (RT 22:4-5 (Feb. 27, 2012) [Keith Decl. Exh. 1].)

The videotape is part of this Court's record to which the public has a First Amendment right of access, in the absence of a legally mandated confidentiality requirement. Despite Ms. L.'s claims of privilege and privacy, this Court ruled that the videotape would be admissible at trial, made no express factual findings that an overriding interest supported sealing the record, and did not order the exhibit sealed. (*Ibid.*) Rather, the Court simply ruled that the videotape should not be disclosed before trial, in order to avoid affecting the jury pool. (RT 45:18-22 (Feb. 29, 2012).) That is no longer a concern, however, because this action was resolved by a plea agreement. Thus, in the absence of any currently valid legal reason not to disclose the videotape, the videotape should be disclosed.

III. IN ADDITION, A COMPELLING PUBLIC INTEREST WOULD BE SERVED BY RELEASING THE VIDEOTAPED STATEMENT OF MS. L. TO SAN FRANCISCO, BECAUSE IT IS IMPORTANT EVIDENCE IN THE ONGOING OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS TO REMOVE DEFENDANT FROM THE OFFICE OF SHERIFF

When Defendant pled guilty on March 12, 2012 and was sentenced on March 19, 2012, Defendant held the office of Sheriff of the City and County of San Francisco. Moreover, when he committed the criminal acts of December 31, 2011, Defendant was a sitting Supervisor and the

Sheriff-Elect. Consequently, on March 21, 2012, the Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco filed written charges of official misconduct against Defendant.

Those charges were the first step in official proceedings to remove Defendant from office.

Those formal proceedings require a full evidentiary hearing before the San Francisco Ethics

Commission and then a vote by the Board of Supervisors on the "full record" whether to sustain the official misconduct charges. The videotaped statement is important evidence in those official proceedings to remove Defendant from office. As discussed above, the Mayor's Charges are in part based on Defendant's criminal acts on December 31. The videotaped statement of the victim is important evidence of those acts. In addition, the videotaped statement is relevant to the allegations that Defendant sought to dissuade witnesses, because one allegation is that Defendant was involved in efforts to dissuade Ivory Madison from giving this videotape to police. These are also part of the City Attorney's investigation. Thus, release of the evidence to San Francisco for use in these proceedings would serve a substantial public interest. Indeed, the public interest in release of this evidence could not be more vital: it is to ensure that the decision whether to remove Defendant from the office of Sheriff is based on consideration of all relevant evidence.

# IV. BECAUSE THIS COURT REFUSED TO FIND THAT EITHER THE ATTORNEY CLIENT PRIVILEGE OR THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY PREVENTED DISCLOSURE OF THE VIDEOTAPED STATEMENT, AND BECAUSE THE JURY POOL IS NO LONGER A CONCERN, THIS COURT SHOULD ORDER ITS RELEASE

As set forth above, this Court made no express finding that an overriding interest supported sealing the videotape and made no order sealing the videotape, despite Ms. L's request that the videotape not be made public. Ms. L. argued that disclosure of the videotape would violate Evidence Code section 954 and her right to privacy. (Notice of Claim of Privilege pursuant to Evidence Code § 954 (Feb. 24, 2012); Ms. L.'s Notice of Motion and Motion for Sanctions Against the San Francisco District Attorney's Office for Violating Ms. L.'s Constitutional Right to Privacy (Cal.Const. Art. I § 28(b)(1) (Feb. 27, 2012).) Following a full and fair hearing of those claims, this Court rejected them; there is no reason for this Court to revisit those rulings. (RT 25:5-17 (Feb. 29, 2012) [see Keith Declaration Exh. 2]; Order Denying Petition for Writ of Mandate or Other Appropriate Relief (Mar. 9, 2012) [see Keith Declaration Exh. 3].)

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Moreover, there is no longer a concern about the jury pool.

The only remaining privacy interest in the videotape belongs to Ivory Madison and Abraham Mertens because the videotape captures images of the interior of their home. (See Reply Brief to Defendant's Opposition to Admit Statements Pursuant to Evidence Code Section 1240, Exhibits 5-13 (Feb. 24, 2012).) Both have waived any right to privacy they may have had in the videotape. (Declaration of Ivory Madison and Declaration of Abraham Mertens [see Keith Declaration Exhs. 8 & 9].)

In the absence of a valid countervailing interest, the Court should order the release of the videotaped statement of Ms. L. to San Francisco, based on the public's First Amendment right to access the videotape and based on the substantial public interest in this videotape being considered in the ongoing official proceedings to remove Defendant from office. Therefore, this Court should release this evidence to San Francisco for copying, and alternatively should authorize the seizing agency (the San Francisco Police Department), the District Attorney, and the Defendant to do so.

#### CONCLUSION

The Court should order that the videotaped statement of the victim in this action, Ms. L., may be released by the Clerk to the City and County of San Francisco. Alternatively, if the Court no longer has actual possession of this evidence, the Court should authorize the seizing agency (the San Francisco Police Department), the District Attorney, and the Defendant to release it to San Francisco for copying.

Dated: April 23, 2012

DENNIS J. HERRERA

City Attorney

JESSE C. SMITH

Chief Assistant City Attorney

SHERRI SOKELAND KAISER

PETER J. KEITH

Deputy City Attorneys

 $\mathbf{R}\mathbf{v}$ 

PETER J. KEITH

Attorneys for Third Parties

MAYOR EDWIN M. LEE and CITY ATTORNEY

DENNIS J. HERRERA