Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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GPD Chief Phillip Hart on hand to answer tough questions

In the first six months of the year, there have been upwards of 29,000 calls to the police department, Gallup Police Chief Phillip Hart said. Police expect calls to increase during July 4th festivities, as alcohol consumption increases and the city swells with visitors.

The most common call pertains to intoxicated individuals, Hart said. He also said they receive thousands of these calls, known as a code 203.

“We have to prioritize the calls we go on,” Hart said during a community meeting at the Neighborhood Senior Center, 607 N. Fourth St., June 28.

While frequent calls on transient activities are lower priorities, acts of violence and life-threatening scenarios trump all other calls for help.

“We’re stretched very thin,” Hart said when asked why the department has to be selective about the calls they respond to. “We are straight-up overwhelmed.”

Hart shared statistics about the calls the department receives. There have been over 400 calls for violent crimes in Gallup this year, surpassed only by Albuquerque and Rio Rancho. For each officer on duty, Gallup has received 16 calls per officer, whereas Albuquerque has received 7.1 and Farmington has received 6.8.

City Councilor Linda Garcia was on hand at the meeting along with members of the Gallup police and fire departments to discuss the issue with Gallup citizens.

Additionally, the meeting focused on the abundance of street drunks in the Gallup area, and some of the attendees mentioned that organizations like Na Nihzhoozhi Center Inc. are not

doing enough to combat the issue in terms of rehabilitation, and that many residents do not feel safe as a result.

Attendees asked why NCI does not do more to help intoxicated individuals. NCI officials were not on hand to answer, but Garcia said representatives from NCI would be invited to the next meeting.

Attendees at the meeting said that it is often the same group of people who are being called on for pickup by Community Service Aides.

“Stats show they’re repeat offenders,” Garcia said during the meeting.

Despite being stretched thin, the officers on duty run across the city throughout their 12-hour shifts.

“[It’s] a dirty, thankless job but they do it well,” Hart said.

When asked what citizens should do to combat the issue, it was suggested by Hart that they come together as a community to protect their property and voice their opinions louder.

“This community has to make themselves known to their councilors, mayor, [and] tell them we’re tired of this,” Hart said.

Garcia stressed to the crowd that it is imperative they get out and vote when the time comes.

“It’s the judges and district attorneys we need to be hard on,” Garcia said.

By Cody Begaye
Sun Correspondent