

Police union votes no confidence on acting chief

Written by By Gallup Sun Staff
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Boyd under fire for alleged oppression within department

For the past four years, Franklin Boyd has had a major role in running the Gallup Police Department, first as acting police chief when Robert Cron retired, then as deputy chief under Phillip Hart. When Hart left the department, Boyd became acting chief again as the city looks for a replacement.

Police officers who have worked under Boyd, and who have asked that their identities not be revealed for fear of retaliation, have reported an atmosphere of oppression within the GPD.

Morale is said to be at its lowest in decades, and officers have privately questioned Boyd's ability to lead them. A number of officers have filed internal complaints against Boyd for what they claim to be vindictive actions against them for no apparent reason.

Only one of these internal fights received publicity, and that surrounded Boyd's actions against Lt. Rosanne Morrisette, a former detective who claimed Boyd went at her for no reason and then made several attempts to demote her before ultimately firing her.

Morrisette in turn filed an internal complaint against Boyd, which resulted in an investigation that ended in her favor. Several months after Morrisette was fired, a city review board reinstated her, and she was placed in a position in which she had little contact with Boyd.

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This all led to a Dec. 13 meeting of the Gallup Police Officers Association, when the assisting board issued a no-confidence decision on Boyd's leadership of the department. Fifteen members voted no confidence, four said they had confidence in his leadership and two abstained.

A public announcement revealed no details about why the association made the decision it did.

Boyd issued memos and statements questioning the association's decision, which he said was based partly on concerns that he has failed to address issues that have been presented by officers within the department.

"I want to make it clear that if anybody is under the false impression that there were issues and concerns brought to my attention (or the command staff) that were never addressed or rectified that is not the case," he said.

Boyd said every concern or issue brought to him by the union was "at least worked out or explained."

If there were issues or complaints that were not addressed, Boyd asked union officials to let him know what they are so he can address them.

"I cannot address issues or concerns if they are not presented to me or my chain of command," Boyd said, adding that anyone who thinks their supervisor has not made an effort to address their concerns can go to another supervisor or to Boyd himself, and the concern will be addressed.

Boyd said every effort has been made to inform union leadership as well as all of the officers working for the department about what is going on inside the department. He said he and GPD Capt. Edmund Yazzie recently met with the patrol sergeants on numerous topics and a memo was released detailing the topics discussed.

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Anyone in the department who has not seen the memo can obtain a copy through their supervisor or from Yazzie, Boyd said.

He gave words of encouragement to those within the department who support him, urging them to “stay focused on the positive and continue to do the outstanding work you are doing.”

Boyd also said people should ignore statements from the minority in the department who feel that the department is “divided.”

“The majority in the department know that is not true,” he said, adding that the department has headed in a positive direction over the past six months and will continue to do so.

In his memo, Boyd gave an update on the city’s search for a new police chief; he said city officials have decided to extend the deadline for submitting applications to Jan. 31 in order to receive more applications. He urged anyone in the department who is thinking of submitting an application to do so.

In closing, Boyd told the officers within the department the command staff is there to support them and they are appreciated for their work.

“Don’t let anyone try to convince you that we don’t care,” he said.

The union sent a letter to City Manager Maryann Ustick about their vote of no confidence, and in her response, Ustick noted the letter gave no reason for the association’s action.

“With all due respect, I am sure you can understand it would be inappropriate for me to take any action against any city employee without asserting the allegations against the employee and reviewing what, if any, underlining facts that are in support of those allegations,” Ustick wrote. “Fundamental fairness, as well as city rules, regulations and practices entitle all city employees to this type of fact based analysis prior to taking any kind of action.”

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Tom Grover, the Albuquerque attorney Morrissette hired in the face of her difficulties with Boyd, is now representing several other officers who have complaints about the way the acting chief is running the police department.

“I have become the point person,” Grover said Jan. 3.

Over the last couple of years, Grover has been vocal about the way both Boyd and former chief Hart have allegedly treated personnel within the department.

During his career, Grover said he has represented hundreds of police officers in the state, but the memos Boyd sent to Morrissette, he asserted, were the most vicious of all.

Since police officers are afraid to speak publically about conditions within the department, Grover said he has assumed the role of public voice. He said he would like to see conditions change in the department so that officers aren't afraid of unreasonable discipline when they make simple mistakes.

“Boyd needs to step back,” Grover said.

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