

## Gallup picks new police chief

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 24 June 2016 05:38

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### New top cop was DEA agent

As a special agent with the US Drug and Law Enforcement Administration in Denver, Colo., Phillip Hart, 53, participated in myriad criminal investigations over the span of two decades. As a police officer in Lakewood, Colo., Hart enforced the law — from traffic violations to street crime.

The city selected Hart to lead the GPD in mid-June, ending a months-long search to replace Robert Cron who retired in March. Come July 1, Hart will bring his years of law enforcement experience to the Gallup Police Department.

“I am very pleased to have Phillip Hart as our new police chief,” City Manager Maryann Ustick said in a prepared statement. “He is energetic, experienced and dedicated to keeping Gallup safe.”

Over the past five months, the city conducted police chief interviews with some 30 applicants from around the United States, Ustick noted. As city manager, she is the bottom line in the hiring and firing of employees.

In a telephone interview, Hart said he’s familiar with Gallup, noting that his wife hails from the Indian Capital.

“I’m very familiar with the city,” Hart said. “I’m eager to get things started and looking forward to

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the swearing-in process.”

### Praise for Boyd

Career police employee Franklin Boyd served as interim chief prior to the hiring of Hart. Mayor Jackie McKinney praised Boyd for his interim work.

“[Boyd] has done an excellent job overseeing the department and keeping our city safe while we looked for someone to permanently fill the position,” McKinney said. “He has set a solid foundation for Phillip Hart to build upon, and we’re fortunate to have them both on our law enforcement team.”

Specifics on Hart’s annual salary weren’t immediately available, but Cron, a former New Mexico State Police officer, earned close to \$90,000 per year in the job. Cron put in his retirement notice a year ago so as to give the city sufficient time to hire someone else.

Hart will be sworn-in June 28, which is the same time as the Gallup City Council meeting. Hart’s most recent law enforcement job was in Albuquerque as a group supervisor.

The Jacksonville, Fla., native possesses an undergraduate degree in criminal justice from New Mexico State University. He said he became acquainted with the Gallup top-cop job in periodic conversations with McKinney. Hart’s resume indicates he retired from police work in May 2013.

“Gallup is a very friendly community and through our partnerships with our neighbors and merchants, we will make sure that we become one of the safest cities in the state of New Mexico,” Hart said.

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