GPD chief speaks to chamber members

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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New Gallup Police Department Chief Phillip Hart spoke to more than a dozen members of the Gallup-McKinley Chamber of Commerce Aug. 17 at the invitation of the Gallup-McKinley County Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber set up the session so the business community could get to know the new police chief.

At the meeting, Hart shared new departmental ideas and goals about safety and security measures for the community.

“It went well,” Bill Lee, chamber executive director, said afterward. “It was a good chance for the business community and others to meet our new police chief.”

Hart touched on topics ranging from citations to the importance of crime prevention to GPD promotions. The new chief has promoted a handful of officers since assuming the job on June 28.

“Safety is important, and we want to work with the business community,” the police chief said. “I have felt welcomed since I arrived in Gallup to do this job.”

Hart talked about panhandling and when the act is considered criminal. He said no one should take perceived criminal matters into their own hands.

“If you suspect something is wrong, just call the police,” Hart said. “We’ll get somebody on it.”

Alice Perez, the executive director at the Gallup Community Pantry, asked about a junior police and fire academy. She said there are high-school students in the community who aspire to careers in law enforcement and firefighting, and such an academy could aid in professional development down the road.

“I think this would be something very worthwhile for the kid[s] at an early age,” Perez said.

Gallup City Manager Maryann Ustick said such a program is already put on by local police and fire departments during the summer.

Hart said there are 67 sworn positions at the Gallup Police Department, with 11 positions open, and three prospective hires currently attending the state police academy.

Upon taking the top GPD job at the end of June, Hart began looking into restructuring patrol.

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