

GPD officer arrested at Shalimar Lounge in apparent domestic dispute

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Carmelita James is a four-year police vet; internal hearing set for May 2

An April 23 fight at a local night spot involving an off duty Gallup police officer ended with assault on a peace officer and resisting, evading and obstruction charges, according to a police report.

An internal investigation hearing on the matter is scheduled to go before Acting Gallup Police Chief Franklin Boyd on Monday. The outcome of that hearing could determine whether Carmelita James remains a police employee, Deputy Police Chief John Allen said.

Allen noted that a formal notice-to-terminate has already been sent to James. Allen said the hearing would be between Boyd and James, saying having others present, like an attorney, wouldn't be something looked down upon.

What Happened?

While on routine patrol at the Shalimar Lounge, 2618 W. Highway 66, Officer Dominic Molina noted in a report that he observed James, 26, a Gallup police officer for the past four years, kicking the right door of a vehicle.

Apparently, James, of St. Michaels, was engaged in an argument with Merissa Watchman, 26, of Gallup who Molina listed in the police report as James' girlfriend. Watchman told Molina that the dispute was because James didn't want to go home with her.

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At the request of another police officer on the scene, a portable breath test was given to James. After a failed breath test, James took off running, and when caught with the assistance of a Shalimar security guard, took a swing at Molina, the police report states. James was ultimately placed in a police car, but somehow managed to remove the handcuffs applied to her.

“At the McKinley County Adult Detention Center (Carmelita) refused to exit Officer Eric Lope’s unit,” Molina wrote in the report. “While standing outside of the unit, she refused to enter the jail. After several attempts to talking her into walking into the jail, she finally entered the jail doors,” Molina wrote.

James was released from jail that same day by paying a \$2,000 cash/surety bond, according to a jail official.

James isn’t the only city female police officer to be arrested in a domestic dispute in recent weeks. Officer Valerie Wilson, 36, resigned from the force two weeks ago. Wilson got into an argument with her girlfriend, Phaleen Morris, while partying at Fire Rock Navajo Casino.

A May 19 court date before Gallup Magistrate Ken Howard is set in that situation, records show. Allen noted that the May court date is not related to Wilson’s resignation.

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