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City Councilman Rides Along on Patrol

Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough spent several hours riding in a police car recently to get a bird's-eye perspective about the typical day of a local law enforcement officer.

During the course of his ride-along with officer Jess Kiebach, Yarbrough rolled to a domestic dispute between a pair of siblings that ended with two brothers shaking hands, a false alarm at a Perris Boulevard business and a reported confrontation at the Metrolink station on C Street, a call that turned out to be unfounded. The highlight of the evening came when Yarbrough and Kiebach responded to an abandoned structure on fire to provide traffic and crowd control.

Yarbrough, who has taken several ride-alongs as a councilmember, said the experience reminds him of the challenges and dangers facing law enforcement officers every day.

It also reinforces the City's belief that its police force consists of highly motivated and professional officers.



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough gets a briefing from Perris Police Officer Jess Kiebach prior to a recent ride-along to show the elected official a typical day in the life of a local law officer.

"The City is committed to providing the best police services possible and after tonight, I am convinced we are being well-served," Yarbrough said. "It's a great to get an on-the-street-view of what police officers deal with every night. Police are people just like everybody else. They have a job to do, one that can sometimes be dangerous."

Like many other communities, the City of Perris spends a large percentage of its budget on police and fire protection. This budget year, Perris is projected to spend nearly \$17 million out of \$28.5 general fund budget.

"The City Council wants to see what we're spending our money on," he said. "We want to study our resources first-hand."

Yarbrough's ridealong took him through north and central Perris, the beat assigned to Thiebach, a former parachuting instructor with 10 years of law-enforcement experience.

Throughout their four hours on patrol, Yarbrough frequently asked questions of the officer: How is it to work in Perris, how many calls do you typically respond to during a shift, what type of incidents occur most frequently?

Kiebach's responses: He enjoys working in the City because there's plenty to do and he stays busy. He usually responds to 5 to 15 calls for service in a shift and those can include family disputes, car break-ins, commercial and residential burglaries, ringing alarms at businesses, vandalism and shoplifting—the kind of offenses that take place in cities big and small everywhere.



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough and Perris Police Officer Jess Kiebach provided traffic and crowd control when an abandoned building caught fire in the City.

"Perris provides us the chance to investigate a wide variety of calls," Thiebach said. "You never know what is going to happen."

Capt. Mike Judge, who serves as Perris police chief, said that City is an "outstanding place to work" thanks in large part to the continuing commitment of the City Council and City administration to make law enforcement its top priority. Like other Perris officers, Judge is employed by the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and serves the City as part of a contract between the two agencies.

"Perris has a veteran City Council and a veteran staff who understand the value of public safety," Judge said. "Even during difficult fiscal times, the City did not decrease its commitment to public safety."

The Perris station is home to several critical functions, making the City a major center of law-enforcement activity in Riverside County. Those units include burglary, narcotics and gang-suppression tasks forces, a forensics unit, the mounted posse patrol and the department's dive team. In addition, Judge said Perris has created its own "special-enforcement teams" to target specific areas of the City.

Judge said Perris volunteers also play a role in supporting police, whether it's members of the Perris Citizens Patrol assisting at accident scenes or volunteers assisting at Live Well Perris health activities or other special events.

"We've got some of the strongest contingents of volunteers in the county," he said.

Yarbrough said he agrees volunteers make Perris special.

He met a group of motivated volunteers while observing police and firefighters work during the Downtown structure fire. He chatted with several members of Compassion Church, who spotted the flames, tried to douse them and notified nearby residents to flee their homes.

The councilman came away impressed by their community pride. He thanked them for taking actions to help others. "They saw a situation and responded by helping their neighbors," he said. "That's the kind of community spirit that makes Perris a great place."



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough chats with members of Compassion Church who helped evacuated nearby homes when an abandoned building caught fire.

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