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## Community Volunteers Tour Perris Police Station



Perris Police Chief Brandon Ford addresses a group of community volunteers during a visit on August 4.

A group of citizen volunteers got a behind-the-scenes look at the Perris Police Department and took part in a question-and-answer session with Chief Brandon Ford, who told them that no amount of law enforcement can replace good parenting and personal responsibility.

Ford's comments came during an August 4 visit from volunteers of the recently formed beautification, community development and economic development committees.

Perris administrators created those citizen groups to encourage greater public input and participation in addressing municipal challenges.

The volunteers were joined by City Manager Richard Belmudez, Deputy City Manager Darren Madkin and Michael McDermott, chief operating officer of the City's Community Economic Development Corp.

The group toured the Perris Police Station, visiting detective, patrol and administrative offices and watching demonstrations on the use of Tasers and law-enforcement canines. Ford said he appreciates the "robust citizen volunteers" who serve as office workers, members of Neighborhood Watch and Citizens on Patrol and Police Explorers. More than 200 volunteers work out of the Perris Police Station.

Cops and the public working together form the best partnership against crime, he said. But nothing can top good values taught at home.

"You are the leaders of this community," Ford said. "You are the people deciding the narrative of this community. You can't expect a teacher to be mom and dad, you can't expect cops to be mom and dad and you can't expect the City Manager to be mom and dad."



Perris Police Officer Alberto Pulido fires a round from a Taser into a dummy during a demonstration to community volunteers.

### Daily challenges

Ford said police are confronted daily with "people who threaten their lives." Their job sometimes means they have to use force to control or subdue people.

"All force looks ugly but it is often necessary," Ford said. "Policing is about control."

The chief said that the goal of law enforcement when confronting armed and dangerous suspects is for no one to end up injured. Police tactics emphasize that "nobody gets hurt on either side."

On other topics, Ford said:

- Perris law spend as much time as possible practicing "community policing" by meeting with residents and business owners but some days calls for service prevent such interaction between cops and the public.
- Perris Police recently assigned an officer to an elementary school to serve as a positive role model for young children.
- Body cameras for Perris Police are being phased in over time. Perris police serve the City under a contract with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department.
- Police are forced to use military-type vehicles on a very small percentage of their calls, such as hostage and barricaded-suspect situations, concerning some residents who believe armored cars and other specialized equipment create barriers between cops and the public. Ford said, however, the Perris Police Department "is not militarized."

"We are your sons and daughters, husbands and wives, friends and neighbors," Ford said. "We are part of the community."



Renzo, the newest police dog in Perris, takes a bite out of crime during a demonstration before about 15 members of three citizens volunteer committees who toured the Perris Police Station.

### Touring the station

During their tour of the Perris Police Station, community volunteers met Sgt. Sam Morovich who was conducting an investigation into mail theft and possible identity theft. Morovich said a probation search turned up hundreds of pieces of stolen mail, credit cards and driver licenses.

"For us it's a great investigation, something that's going to yield positive results in the end," Morovich told the visitors.

The tour included witnessing officers fire Taser rounds into a dummy and learning how the device works. Taser darts send electricity through the body which causes muscle contractions that make the target fall and provide law officers a non-lethal alternative to subdue suspects. But Tasers do not work if the target is under the influence of certain drugs.

A favorite part of the tour was witnessing patrol canine Renzo and handler Tim Quick working together as a team. Renzo, a Belgian Malinois understands only Dutch so Quick had to master about 20 commands before they could begin patrol duties. Police canines are used to search buildings and subdue unruly suspects, most of whom give up when notified a dog is part of the search team, Quick said. Renzo is about two-and-a-half, weighs 80 pounds, is issued his own bullet-resistant vests and is called upon 10 to 20 times a day to employ his unique skills.



Canine officer Tim Quick (right) explains the use of patrol dogs and how they assist officers in keeping the peace in Perris.

### Citizen reaction

Tisa Rodriguez, a member of the Community Development Committee, said she welcomed the chance to meet Perris cops and see some of the tools of their trade.

"It's a good thing to get the community involved," she said. "That means involving a variety of opinions and life perspectives. That makes us stronger."

She also liked the community outreach programs, like the one that sent a cop to elementary school.

"Children need to see police as people, not potential adversaries," Rodriguez said.

Volunteer Laurel Rudy, a member of the Community Development Committee, said she particularly enjoyed watching the canine demonstration. The conversation with Ford helped her understand that "cops have priorities" and that Perris police handle lots of calls on a daily basis. The tour of the police station, as well as an earlier visit to a fire station, leaves her confident the City "has exceptional police and fire departments."

She also gave Police Chief Ford high marks for his presentation and skills as a public speaker.

"He is excellent, charismatic and dynamic," Rudy said.

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