

A Town Hall with Sheriff Doug Schuster

An enthusiastic crowd attended the Town Hall held for Sheriff Doug Schuster at the Dolan Springs Community Center on February 9. A packed house included members of newly forming Neighborhood Watches in Dolan Springs and Meadview hoping to hear news of eventual Law Enforcement backup for their efforts. Also attending were residents from areas outside the towns, also fed up with the thefts, burglaries, and more recently, home invasions taking place, with police response taking hours.

Most of us who choose to live in rural areas, don't expect "standards" established in highly populated, well-funded areas to be met. However, with the standard for Mohave County being 1.57-2.0 deputies per 1000 of population, as reported by Sheriff Schuster, and the reality being just .094 per 1000, there is a serious lack of Law Enforcement coverage, and not just in outlying areas! He has 1 deputy for each 184 square miles and it should be 1 per square mile. The entirety of District 4, which includes Chloride, Dolan Springs, White Hills and Meadview, has 1 deputy, Sergeant Carlos Rooks. Thank you Sergeant Rooks!

With the population more than doubling in Mohave County since 1990, and the Sheriff staff down by 7%, Sheriff Schuster named the culprits; turnover and morale. He explained that it takes \$100,000 and 1 year of training to get a recruit up to speed and then surrounding areas snatch them up with higher pay and better benefits and he has to start all over again. The outside areas "thank him kindly" as their training budgets shrink and his soars. The Sheriff said he would prefer Deputies who live here and are invested in their community. He invited everyone to get the word out, if there are any local young people who might want to get into Law Enforcement, to come see him! As for morale, he has been working on a "new culture" within the Sheriff's Department that promotes mutual respect and cooperation between the Department and citizens. He said the Sheriff's Dept. was receiving 6 complaints a week when he started; they now receive 0. He said his Department is 100% transparent. If they make a mistake they admit it and learn from it, sharing all. The Sheriff said his Department is working hard to get where they need to be, and that he needs the communities' help to get there.

Sheriff Schuster reported that during the 1st year of his 10 year plan he hopes to have a station with 2 live-in Deputies in Dolan Springs to cover District 4. "No promises!" He said he is lobbying individual Board Members on the County Board of Supervisors, for \$1.58 Million. **He NEEDS our communities' support! Show up (he said we won't need signs or pitchforks), to the County Board of Supervisor's Budget meeting, Tuesday, February 19, at 9:30 a.m. Meeting to be held at the main Administration building (the big new building behind the Sheriff's Dept. on Beale Street. Turn right after passing under the Hwy 40 over pass)** No need to sign up to speak, either, just show up as support for the Sheriff's plea.

The Sheriff had much more to say about the Sheriff Dept. interaction with the Neighborhood Watch and Posse programs, how effective they are working together, as well as other useful bits of information. For now, let's focus on getting our Sheriff, who is sincere and dedicated to serving and protecting our communities, the funding he needs to do so!

Ellen Reh-Bower, Dolan Springs