

Gainesville Police Department Canine (K-9) Unit returns to regular duty status

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (Jan. 19, 2024) – The Gainesville Police Department Canine (K-9) Unit will return to regular duty status on Monday, January 22. This full reinstatement comes after ten months under a Limited Deployment Protocol.

Gainesville Police Chief Lonnie Scott first removed the K-9 Unit from service in late 2022 following an unexpected change in unit supervision. In March 2023, as the unit faced training challenges and a shortage of officers, City Manager Cynthia W. Curry initiated the extended period of limited deployment to give the Gainesville Police Department (GPD) time to increase K-9 Unit staffing.

Chief Scott reports the department has now met the minimum operational staffing goal. “Getting the K-9 Unit back to regular duty is an important step for our department,” said Chief Scott. “A well-trained K-9 Unit saves lives. The canines are used to find missing people, search for weapons, and track and apprehend armed and violent subjects.”

During the months spent in limited deployment, GPD has added two K-9 officers and two new canines, bringing the unit to its current staffing level of four K-9 teams. Additional changes include revised training protocols, improved supervision, and enhanced focus on safety measures and oversight.

In addition, the K-9 Unit Policy Manual received a thorough review with a number of updates. These include an expanded list of the equipment provided to each handler and a higher level of detail in determining how and when the units will be deployed.

“Our intention with the limited deployment was to support the police department and its officers,” said City Manager Curry. “This strategic move has achieved the intended results. It gave GPD the opportunity to evolve procedures so our skilled and dedicated police officers can continue to have all the tools they need to protect our neighbors.’

While under limited deployment, the K-9 Unit was only activated on a case-by-case basis as approved by Chief Scott. After its scheduled return to full duty status on Monday, that decision can be made by other personnel in the chain of command in accordance with criteria listed in the updated policy manual.

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