

29 March 2013

Johnny Cervantes, now a commander with the Scottsdale, Ariz., Police Department, has been formally hired to replace Casa Grande Police Chief Bob Huddleston, the city announced today (Friday).

Huddleston retires Sunday after 32-plus years with the Police Department.

Cervantes has earlier been conditionally offered the job, pending final checks by the Arizona Police Officer Standards and Training Board.

He takes over on Tuesday, April 2.

Nationwide advertising brought 77 applicants for the position, later pared to four. Those were Cervantes and Andre Anderson, now a commander with the Glendale, Ariz., Police Department; Charles Padgett, interim chief of police of the West Allis, Wis., Police Department, and Christopher Cotillo, chief of police of the Seat Pleasant, Md., Police Department.

The following day, the list was further pared to just Cervantes and Anderson.

The city's announcement Friday said that

Cervantes most recently has served as a patrol commander for the Scottsdale department. As a commander, he managed the expansion and redistricting of the Downtown District, including personnel and equipment allocation, implemented a new deployment model and modified district boundaries.

He also developed and implemented data driven crime reduction strategies and was involved in the department's strategic planning process.

Before being promoted to commander in 2008, Cervantes served in various capacities for the Scottsdale department for 22 years. He began his career in law enforcement for the town of Miami, Ariz.

"Johnny Cervantes has the qualities that are important to lead the Casa Grande Police Department into the future," the announcement quoted City Manager Jim Thompson as saying.

"His accomplishments, coupled with his extensive knowledge of police operations, demonstrate that he is dedicated to public safety. I have full confidence that he will do a great job to protect and serve the citizens of Casa Grande."

As chief, Cervantes will oversee all operations of the Casa Grande department, which The department currently has 78 sworn officers distributed among four divisions: Patrol, Special Operations, Criminal Investigations and Communications.

He will be responsible for providing direction and evaluating programs, priorities, policies and procedures as well as compliance with state and federal laws. Cervantes will also continue to lead the department in implementing a five-year strategic plan that was developed in 2012.

"Casa Grande is a growing city with a great vision for the future and a strong sense of community," the announcement quoted Cervantes as saying. "That is exactly what I was looking for when exploring professional growth opportunities. I have been fortunate in my career to work in two outstanding police organizations that were community-focused and committed to excellence.

"I believe the Casa Grande Police Department embodies those values and I am honored to be a part of the organization. I look forward to working with the City Council, city leadership,

the community, internal and external partners, and the men and women of the Casa Grande Police Department."

The announcement said Cervantes received his bachelor of arts in history from Arizona State University, his masters in business administration from the University of Arizona and is a graduate of the FBI National Academy police executive management training. He is a recipient of the City Manager's Award of Excellence and the Chief's Award of Excellence, given by the city of Scottsdale.

-:-

During the public question and answer session at Eva's Fine Mexican Food, Cervantes made the following statements:

OPENING STATEMENT

I'm currently a commander with the city of Scottsdale. I've been in that position for five years, but I've been with the city for 22 and a half years.

I was born and raised in Miami, Ariz. I started my law enforcement career with the Miami Police Department. I started off, of all things, as an animal control officer, believe it or not, and then I went into police department as a police officer. I spent two and a half years doing that. In Scottsdale, I've had the fortunate opportunity to work in a variety of assignments, both at the line level and at the supervision level in those capacities, both from investigations, patrol and also in internal affairs.

So I've had a broad breadth of experience in those things.

And for any of you that know about Scottsdale, the area that I command is the downtown area, which is the entertainment area. Supposedly it's one of the highest concentration of bars and restaurants in Maricopa County, so it's very challenging. I also have the spring training facility of the San Francisco Giants in my area and one of the biggest employers, which is Scottsdale Health Care, so as you can see I have quite a bit of challenges under my command. I lead approximately 65 to 70 police officers.

As far as one of the biggest reasons I wanted to come here, I could talk about my education, I could talk about my plans, I could talk about all those things, which are very important, but one thing you can't replace is the relationship with the community.

I believe no matter what philosophy you have in terms of policing, community policing, you could have CompStat (crime tracking and analysis software), you could have different models of policing that exist.

The bottom line is, the reason I wanted to come here is not because I saw an advertisement looking for a place to go and retire. I've been looking at this location for the last two years because I knew Chief Huddleston was going to retire.

So I wanted to go to a place that fit me, fit my vision and my goals and my values. And I've looked at this beautiful community and I took the time to meet individuals from within the department, I've took the time to meet community members. And I've said, you know what, this is place for me.

And look out right now (at audience) this is amazing. In Scottsdale I don't always get this amount of people out, so the fact that you guys are out here, caring enough about who your police chief is going to be tells me everything that I know and just reaffirms my decision to come out and say, you know what, this is the community I want. Because I want to go to a community from what I see here. So I just want to say congratulations to you for coming out here and I applaud you.

This process has been amazing, so with that said I just want to say thank you very much and I appreciate the opportunity to come out.

ANSWER TO AUDIENCE QUESTION

QUESTION: If employees are greatest assets, what is your greatest asset to lead the agency?

CERVANTES: Well, I think the greatest asset that any leader have is, first and foremost, they have to care about their employees and they have to care about the community. They have to care about their role and take that seriously as a

manager and as a leader. So I think that's first and foremost.

The greatest asset I have is the ability to relate to people. In high school, for example, everyone else was getting awards at the assembly that you have at the end of the year, like scholarships to this and scholarships to that. I got the good citizenship award.

Bust, honestly, I've learned that over time, and especially in this field, that my greatest asset is communicating with people and dealing with people.

Like I said earlier, my degree in business matters nothing if I don't have the respect from the community and, obviously, the employees that work for me.

So looking out for the interests of my employees, looking out the interests of the community, to me that's my greatest asset, is the ability to communicate and work together to resolve or to conduct our primary mission, which is to make this community safe. So I think that's my greatest asset.

CLOSING STATEMENT:

Essentially, I just want to say I really do believe I would be a good fit in this organization and this community. I do have experience. I'm an Arizona native, so I understand the laws, I understand the community. I come from a small town.

It's about a sense of community. The other day I went to a (Casa Grande) City Council meeting and I watched the council meeting take place. If you've been to, or watched the news about the political processes nowadays I can get pretty ugly. And I watched the council members, the way they interacted, and I said to myself they actually care about one another. It seems like they get along well. Now, they may have differences of opinions, but they get along well and they get the job done.

And so I just think that part is important. And I got a sense that that's the place that I want to be, and with my heart I really believe I could be that person and lead this organization into the future.