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CIVILIAN OFFICERS WILL EASE POLICE OVERLOAD; [SEMINOLE Edition]

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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The department received nearly 2,000 more calls for service, ranging from traffic checks to burglaries, in 1997 than the previous year. Many of those calls do not require sworn officers, Police Chief Durbin Gatch told city commissioners this week.

A six-year study by the department shows at least half of its cases could be handled by non-sworn civilian officers. The study showed total cases had increased 20 percent since 1991.

Full Text (271 words)

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*Casselberry,
Florida*

CASSELBERRY - The Police Department will get two new community service officers to help handle the increase in calls.

The department received nearly 2,000 more calls for service, ranging from traffic checks to burglaries, in 1997 than the previous year. Many of those calls do not require sworn officers, Police Chief Durbin Gatch told city commissioners this week.

A six-year study by the department shows at least half of its cases could be handled by non-sworn civilian officers. The study showed total cases had increased 20 percent since 1991.

"It's almost a waste of the sworn officers' time to handle all the minor calls," Gatch said.

Commissioners unanimously approved the chief's request to hire two community service officers instead of the patrol officers originally requested.

The community service officers will take much of the administrative burden off the sworn officers, Gatch said. They can respond to nonemergency calls when there is no threat of physical confrontation and no crime in progress. They can also prepare incident reports.

The non-sworn officers would work noon to 8 p.m., when most of the calls come in, Gatch said.

"This would free up the sworn officers to handle the more serious cases and help avoid burnout of the officers," he said. "The community officers in Altamonte Springs and the county have worked out well."

Gatch estimated the yearly savings from hiring a community service officer instead of a patrol officer would be between \$8,000 and \$10,000 each.

Of the 79 Police Department employees, 52 are sworn officers. There are 13 employees in the communications area, four in animal control and 10 in administration. SEQN: 81561178