KPD Steps Up Foot Patrols in Response to Downtown Harassement Complaints

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

Last month some Kodiak residents vented their frustration at the City Council over what they saw as inaction over vagrants accosting people in the heart of downtown.

“There are drunks down there all the time. It’s disgusting,” said Judi Kidder.

“What’s it going to take? A Rape? A murder? Some woman getting beaten to a pulp?” asked Lisa Zeimer. “It is a disgrace and it is a blight on our community and I cannot believe that the council lets this stand.”

Both spoke at the city council meeting on May 9th.

In response, the Kodiak Police Department has very visibly increased the number of foot patrols of the area in and around the Mall, where vagrants and public inebriates gather.

“The numbers for arrests for public intoxication or for possessing an open container in a public area are trending upwards, because it’s part of our overall more proactive and aggressive strategy with trying to address those things,” said Police Chief T.C. Kamai.

However, he said throwing people in jail only treats the symptoms of the vagrant issue in Kodiak, which has many causes and few solutions.

“I think we live, over all, in a safe town, but there are certain areas, and this might be one of them, where just simply by virtue of having some intoxicated people just kind of hanging around in the area where an extra bit of caution would be prudent, I think.”

The chief echoed Mayor Pat Branson’s suggestion from the May meeting for people to report every incident where they feel unsafe or uncomfortable, not just the serious ones:

“We want to keep track of it and we have the ability to send officers down to the area and they can look and perhaps even identify,” he said. “And maybe just by virtue of being there and responding to a complaint, just their mere presence might discourage these folks from continuing that behavior.”

The Kodiak Police blotter shows 15 reports of “community policing” and checks of bars in the downtown area on Sunday while officers were on foot patrol. Saturday saw 25 and last Friday 21 more.

“We’re doing the best we can,” Kamai said.