

Mayor Pro Tem John Hamrick

Note that these responses are mine and do not represent Cañon City Council or Cañon City government.

1. Is crime a problem in Cañon City?

This question cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no” because it is too generalized. Any crime is a “problem”, and to the victims involved causes a lot of distress, even if the the current legislature in Denver considers the crime “minor” or something to be tolerated to achieve racial/social “equity”. The no cash bail edict and decriminalization of felonies are perfect examples of criminal justice distortions created by the legislature.

And I would note that I asked this group for the top three actions City Council can take to reduce crime and did not receive suggestions for any concrete actions, only “God and motherhood” statements. To develop solutions we have to be able to identify, specifically, the problem(s). We can say crime is too high, but knowing which crime is essential to the process.

2. "Do you believe crime is a significant concern for Cañon City residents right now? Why or why not?"

Again, the question is very generalized. The word “significant” deserves a definition as well as delineating the proportion of Cañon City residents. Do people feel secure in their persons, property and effects? Some do and some don’t. Some have taken steps to reduce concerns about crime, e.g., cameras and neighborhood watch programs. And our Police Chief has a very commendable open door policy to meet with citizens for communication about any crime concerns. As in the answer to question 1, above, our hands have been substantially tied by the Colorado Legislature.

3. "What specific role do you believe the City Council should play in addressing public safety in Cañon City?"

Public safety is the obligation of every level of government.

Here are some of the actions the City has taken.

- The City offers a recruitment bonus to try and attract experienced officers. Unfortunately, we have only seen two candidates take us up on the offer, both coming from Fremont County Sheriff's office. While it helps our agency, it has a net zero effect for adding to overall local capacity.
- The City has been recruiting and hiring cadets to go through the Police Academy for several years now to try and address an industry wide shortfall in Police Officers. As part of that

strategy, we try to source candidates locally as we know that they have a better chance of staying with the agency long term.

- The City has invested in tools like the Flock camera system that reads license plates coming in and out of town (and other strategic locations) to help the PD identify stolen vehicles and other vehicles of interest.
- The City along with other agencies have invested in Tyler software system that will help with crime analytics and predictive modeling.
- The City applied for and received a Department of Justice COPS grant to hire new officers to help patrol the river walk and downtown.
- The City created a Park Ranger position to help patrol parks and the mountain parks. A second park ranger position was added from the aforementioned COPS grant.

4. "Are the current city resources allocated to public safety in Cañon City appropriate for our community's needs? Please explain your reasoning."

This topic is formally reviewed during the budgeting process. The topic of crime is also addressed during annual Police Department updates. Council has been active in providing resources, e.g., increased salary and benefits, for the Police Department (see the answer to 3, above) and continues to monitor the results of those efforts. An example of how difficult it is to strike a balance between community needs and resources is that it takes six months of training for a first-time officer candidate to achieve Certification, while any officer is only obligated to give the City two weeks notice when leaving employment.

5. "What specific policy approaches or changes, if any, would you support to address crime concerns in Cañon City?"

The word "crime" is too general. Council is concerned about crime, but to take action we have to identify specific crimes and identify and prioritize their impact on citizens to be able to craft solutions, if any, that are within Council's control. The new software now in use provides valuable information to Council supported by data. This system will only increase in utility as time passes.