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TEMPLE DAILY TELEGRAM /

Incidents of crime in Belton were up in 2012 over 2011

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BELTON — Both the crime rate and calls for police service in Belton have increased from a year ago, according to an annual police department report.

The overall crime rate in 2012 was up about 16 percent from 2011, Belton Police Chief Gene Ellis said in a presentation last week to the City Council. Violent crimes, such as rape, robbery, assault and arson, were also up about seven percent, according to the report.

Among violent crime cases, Belton had two murders in 2012, including an intoxicated manslaughter on U.S. 190 that was classified as a homicide in crime statistics. In 2011, there were no homicides in Belton, Ellis said.

Arrests in Belton were also up 28 percent, which Ellis partly

credited to a pro-active approach by police.

“That means officers going out there ... identifying and finding people doing wrong, criminals in the act or crimes that just occurred and making those arrests,” he said. “A lot of self-initiated arrests from our officers. That’s the positive spin.”

Traffic accidents also increased almost 27 percent, from 561 in 2011 to 710 last year.

The annual report also included racial profiling data on Belton traffic stops, in which whites were involved in 74 percent of all traffic stops. Blacks, which account for 8 percent of the Belton population, accounted for 11 percent of traffic stops, and Hispanics, which account for 29 percent of the population, were involved in 13.5 percent of all stops, according to the report.

Calls for service also increased

by 15 percent from 2011, according to the report, and 41 percent since 2010, highlighting the city’s growth and new demands on the department, Ellis said.

“Our area’s growing and combining that with our increased emphasis on being proactive” led to the increase, he said.

In light of the growing population, the City Council tasked a 20-member committee to research infrastructure and facility needs in the city that has included an assessment of the Belton Police Department building on East Second Avenue. Committee members toured the building in January and reviewed a proposal to add a 10,000-square-foot addition to the existing structure.

Funding for the expansion could go before voters in November, if recommended by the committee, according to city officials.

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