

From Behind the Badge

Do police officers have monthly 'ticket quotas'? I was also told police departments receive money from ticket fines. Is this true?

- John T.

Dear John T:

A superb question. I am delighted you asked. The short answers are "No & No." Please allow me some latitude to explain in greater detail.

A police officer's job performance is evaluated annually – just like any other profession. An officer's ability to perform essential job tasks, duties and functions are catalogued by supervisors daily. Obviously, one job function is to observe and apprehend persons who willfully violate the law. This includes writing citations, making arrests, and other traditional crime prevention duties.

Officers are also evaluated on dozens of other functions. These include, but are not limited to: professionalism; crime scene preservation; community relations; oral communication; written communication; officer safety; driving; creativity; proper application of laws; knowledge of Town policy and much, much more. The average Garner Police Officer is evaluated on their ability to perform more than 100 job functions and tasks. Writing tickets stands solo in a long list of duties.

The 'quota myth' – if you will – may stem from a continuous public sharing of statistics by law enforcement. For example, the Garner Police Department maintains detailed records of all arrests made, tickets issued and crimes reported. This helps illustrate Department activities and identify patterns of criminal behavior (also known as 'Crime Mapping'). Law enforcement uses statistical data to both quantify and justify activities according to community needs. Simply stated, without these numbers, crime would be more difficult to predict, target and reduce.

The Garner Police Department does not receive any money from court costs, fines and other fees associated with citations issued for violations of state law (traffic, criminal etc.). The amounts themselves are established by State and County governments. Fines and other fees help pay for individual County Court and certain State expenditures.

From Behind the Badge is a bi-monthly editorial written by Garner Police Officers in response to questions posed by citizens. To submit questions, contact the (Garner Times/News) or Garner Police Public Information Officer Jon Blum at: 919.773.6077; jblum@ci.garner.nc.us