

Arizona Daily Star

Incoming Sheriff Mark Napier ready to get back into law enforcement

By Caitlin Schmidt Arizona Daily Star

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Mike Christy / Arizona Daily Star

Mark Napier is Pima County's new sheriff after bringing home 56 percent of the votes in Tuesday's election.

With nearly 30 years of experience in law enforcement, Mark Napier said he's ready to get back to work in the field and help improve the state of the Pima County Sheriff's Department.

The Republican challenger defeated Sheriff Chris Nanos in what became one of Tucson's more heated races. Napier prevailed over the Democrat Nanos, 56 percent to 44 percent in Tuesday's election.

After a contentious election cycle, Napier, a retired Tucson police captain, said his first priority is to restore department morale among many front-line employees who've felt overlooked, bullied or unappreciated.

"I'm going to treat them in a manner that's more respectful, more open and more in the vein of (service) and leadership," he said. "I acknowledge the fact that as a boss, your job is to help people to do their jobs."

During the campaign, Napier talked about the department being top-heavy, specifically the top two positions. After the suicide of Chief of Staff Brad Gagnepain and the indictment of Chief Deputy Chris Radtke on federal charges of misuse of public funds, both positions are vacant.

“I certainly don’t see any merit at the current time to restore either position,” Napier said. “I’ll also be looking at bureau chiefs for other opportunities to maybe do some consolidation or scale back some senior command positions.”

Overpopulation in the county jail came into discussion during the election cycle, and Napier said he’s ready to start working on a solution.

“There should be more community-based alternatives than there are,” he said. “There are ways to redirect people who are nonviolent offenders and don’t pose a risk to the community to some alternatives that will be less expensive and more effective.”

As of Wednesday afternoon, Napier had already spoken to law enforcement leaders across Southern Arizona, and discussions of collaboration are already in the works.

“I think (Tucson Police Chief) Chris Magnus and I working together can bring our agencies together and talk about best practices in each department,” he said.

He expressed appreciation to all his supporters, but added a special thanks to Pima County Democrats, saying he wouldn’t have had as strong a showing as we did if voters hadn’t been willing to cross party lines and lay aside partisanship.

Napier’s term begins Jan. 1. He will be sworn-in by the board of supervisors later that month.

Nanos was appointed to the position by the Board of Supervisors in July 2015 to complete the term of longtime Sheriff Clarence Dupnik.

Over the past several months, Nanos’ campaign was clouded with allegations of the FBI investigation into alleged misuse of funds intended for crime fighting, which culminated in the indictment of Radtke in late September.

Nanos did not return the Star’s calls for comment Tuesday night, but he conceded to Napier and announced his retirement in a post on his personal Facebook page.

“Thank you ALL for your support. You have no worries as the PCSD will ALWAYS keep you safe,” Nanos wrote in the post. “It was an honor to work alongside so many talented and caring individuals, just as it has been an honor to serve you and this great community.”

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