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Camera concerns addressed

By Stephanie Schendel

The cameras will likely be placed in the area surrounding Adams Mall and Colorado Street due to the concentrated number of violent crimes that occur there. The estimated installation date for the cameras is this summer.

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Pullman Police Chief Gary Jenkins met with a small group of community members Wednesday and addressed privacy concerns about the cameras that will be installed on College Hill.

The cameras will likely be placed this summer in the area surrounding Adams Mall and Colorado Street due to the concentrated number of violent crimes that occur there.

Pullman PD received a two-year, \$300,000 federal grant last fall, which is funding the research and the cameras.

Cameras as a policing tactic are not new to law enforcement, Jenkins said. However, the majority of places that have cameras are major metropolitan areas.

Part of the reason Pullman was chosen as one of the six recipients of the grant was because of the university-setting and because it is an opportunity to test this type of policing method in a different environment, he said.

"I don't think our grant would have been considered had we had not done all the things we had done up to this point to try and address these issues," Jenkins said. "We do a huge amount with prevention and education, we work with ASWSU and we have two officers assigned exclusively full-time to College Hill."

Despite these efforts, the number of violent assaults has not decreased, he said.

Zachary Hays, a WSU professor of criminal justice who is working to fulfill the research component of the grant, said part of the research entails surveys and interviews with students. Links to the online surveys will be sent out to students' university emails in the next month or so.

The cameras will likely discourage crime in the neighborhood where they are installed because if people know their behavior is being recorded, they will likely behave differently, he said.

Most people do not premeditate the crimes that occurs on College Hill like fighting, Hays said. A lot of the incidents are opportunistic and happen in the heat of the moment.

Jenkins said the grant went through Pullman City Council twice for approval — once when they initially applied for the grant and again to have the council approve the acceptance of the grant. So far there has not been much student response to the cameras, Jenkins said.

He expects the last meeting, which will take place in the CUB, to initiate a larger discussion than in the previous meetings.

Jordan Graham, the ASWSU director of community outreach, said she is supportive of the cameras.

"I think that the fact that Chief Jenkins is making these forums public and that he wants feedback is really great," Graham said. "I think that having the opportunity for ASWSU to host the last one in March will be a really great opportunity for students to give some input and some feedback."

The next public meeting will be hosted by ASWSU and the WSU Police Advisory Board at noon on March 21 in the CUB Lair.

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