

Valley residents let their voices be heard about Penzone's decision to suspend posse
photo

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SUN CITY WEST, Ariz. (FOX 10) - The conversation continued long after the meeting ended. Sun City West residents are worried, some are even angry over Maricopa County Sheriff Paul Penzone's decision to pull posse members off patrol.

"Everybody in Sun City West was just left hanging, there's no vacation watch, there's no welfare check, there's no presence of any kind of posse whatsoever," one resident said.

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Sheriff Penzone suspended duties of the posse in late-January after an audit found that poor record keeping allowed some unqualified people to serve as posse members.

Only four of the 235 members had actually completed the entire certification process. Others had convictions and arrests for a range of crimes from domestic violence, to drug charges, and even sex crimes.

Those members are no longer with the posse.

"When I make that decision, it's not because I want to pull people off the street, but if one of those individuals who we know shouldn't be out there continues to be out there and does something to the detriment to the community, I'm responsible," Sheriff Penzone said.

But residents say the posse members help keep their neighborhoods safe.

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"The thing that I really can't understand... his choice of stopping the patrols, no cars because people weren't properly vetted," one resident said.

Ethically, this organization is going to have a consistent standard, whether you are a full-time employee or a volunteer who represents the organization," Penzone said.

Most people in attendance said they support the sheriff's call for background checks and proper vetting, they just don't want to wait 30, 90, or even 120 days for patrols to be reinstated.

That's how they say the sheriff said it could take.