

Significant grant will enable LPD to better police roads, investigate accidents

BY JOSHUA MALONI

GM/Managing Editor

The Lewiston Police Department is upgrading its in-car and in-office equipment, and will debut a sizable addition to its festival crowd-control plans, thanks to a \$495,000 Division of Criminal Justice Services' law enforcement technology grant.

Chief Frank Previte said the LPD is installing license-plate readers and cameras into patrol cars; adding new message boards, a drone and a surveillance tower to enhance safety measures at community events; enhancing lighting and recording devices used at crime and major accident scenes; and streamlining the interviewing process with new technology.

"All of it is going to help us public safety wise," Previte said Tuesday.

LPD oftentimes borrows an observation tower "for festivals and different sorts of things and events that we have," and "for the number that we have, that has been hugely helpful – especially just when we use it at the Peach Festival to see things before they happen. We've broken up fights when groups are gathering, because we had that kind of view."

The LPD model, "It extends like a scissor lift. ... It'll give us 30 feet up in the air, and it's got all the windows around it, too."

At \$200,000, the observation tower will claim about 40% of the total grant money.

However, "The reason that I initiated this grant was because of the license plate readers, because I wanted to get license plate readers in the cars," Previte said.

He explained, "Those generate a lot of traffic stops, because they tell us anytime that a vehicle is suspended. When you pass it, it runs the plate automatically and then pops up. It'll tell you, so, obviously, you don't have to run it, type stuff in or call it in. It just automatically detects it off the database. Plus, for the in-car camera, we just had two chases in the last two days."

Previte said, "It generates a lot more traffic stops, because it alerts. So, who knows how many times you were driving by something, either the driver's suspended or the license plate's suspended, and you wouldn't know it – unless you actually, physically ran the plates. This just pops it up automatically."

Moreover, "The license plate readers, they can also capture things – so, if we had something stolen – your house gets broken into – we can go back and see what license plates were in the



neighborhood. What was captured; what was around. It helps us not only to investigate, but also on a preventative basis, as well, especially with the new technologies that are in some of this equipment."

New cameras in the backseat of the patrol cars, meanwhile, will provide an extra layer of safety and accountability, both for officers and for those in custody.

"Right now, we don't have a rear-facing camera for anybody that we have in the backseat. That's going to be a big addition," Previte said.

"We have a prisoner in the back seat. Up until this point, they can say, 'It's my word against yours.' What happens when you're back there; there's no video of you back there. There's no video that we have. But now, that's going to be something that we have."

In addition, the grant provided for "software applications and de-

ployment," Previte said. "I got two brand-new trailers. There's one operational up on Center Street right now. And there's one in our garage. We just got those yesterday. We just unloaded those off the truck."

"It's a message sign, as well as a radar sign, but those actually have data in there where it'll capture traffic patterns, traffic speeds. So, now, not only when I plug it in on

SEE LEWISTON, continued on Page 5

Lewiston Police Department Chief Frank Previte is shown with a new message board, which, on this day, was placed on Center Street. A grant enabled the LPD to acquire sign boards that both display and collect data. "The biggest impact, some of it will be the traffic: The traffic patterns and what we get off of the information off of the signs, as well as the signs being used just for information," Previte said. "The good thing about those signs, as well, is the new technology. Those actually have modems in them, so we can control them from our phone. I can change the message from here. So, if something's going on, on Center Street, and we have an emergency or something, we can get an emergency message out right away. The good part of those, and the impact for us, is going to be the traffic data. We can see where our problems are. It can help us manage. The biggest thing that we get right now still, especially after COVID, is traffic complaints. People speeding."

LPD Capt. Mike Salada is shown with the department's new FARO 3-D scanner.

Patrol cars are being equipped with both license plate readers and rear-seat cameras.

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Protestant and Catholic Church Services at 11:00

Starting at Noon
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Pony and Hayrides – Dunk Tank
K-9 Unit Demo – Bergholz Band Concert

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