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Council approves proposals for PD's 'Go Slow Lafayette' campaign

By Elaine Borden Chandler



Lafayette's Chief of Police Ben Alldritt Photo Jeff Heyman

Lafayette's Chief of Police Ben Alldritt gave a presentation on Lafayette PD's "Go Slow Lafayette" campaign to the City Council on Feb. 27. The campaign is focused on improving pedestrian and traffic safety within Lafayette. The presentation covered Alldritt's main proposal, the purchase of four different kinds of equipment, and a proposal from Lafayette Director of Engineering and Public works Mike Moran to update the Lafayette Traffic Calming Program policy document.

While some citizens have called for greater police officer presence in monitoring drivers, Alldritt instead recommends the use of technology. "For better or for worse, we're a very finite resource as far as officers go," he said. He emphasized that the campaign is currently in its information gathering phase where technology is more effective and cost efficient.

The first of the technology requested are two portable radar trailers, also known as speed trailers, which are large wheeled signs that inform drivers of their current speed from the sides of roads. "Our existing speed trailer is pretty much defunct," Alldritt said. The two new speed trailers will have the additional capability of recording the speeds of passing cars and each cost approximately \$9,000.

The second items proposed are two battery operated portable radar signs. These signs would record and display drivers' speeds, and could be moved to various locations. Lafayette PD currently has one portable radar sign that inform drivers of their current speed. Each sign costs approximately \$4,200.

The third kind of technology are two low-profile radar boxes that record vehicle speed but do not display it. Unlike the radar trailers and portable radar signs, they are not intended to make drivers slow down but instead to accurately collect drivers' speeds without alerting them. They will be placed in areas where speeding is particularly problematic. The police department has one of these but it is nearly nonoperational.

The fourth items are two lidar units for speed enforcement. These are commonly known as speed guns and are used by officers to accurately determine a driver's speed. These new lidar units are able to film and record speed violations, which the two current lidar units owned by the PD do not. Each unit costs approximately \$6,200.

Alldritt firmly stated that none of this technology, except the two lidar units for speed enforcement, collect any personal details and none of the information shared with the city or public will include personal information.

"The goal behind collecting the data is deploying our resources at the PD more wisely or more efficiently; also sharing this information with the council, share it with the public, and share it with Mike and his team [...] when we do analysis and when we get requests for various speed bumps or additional signage or reducing the speed limits in areas," Alldritt said. "We'd make this data publicly available on the city's website." He estimated the overall cost of these purchases would be \$50,000-\$60,000 and would be covered by the existing Police Services budget.

Moran then presented his proposal to update the Lafayette Traffic Calming Guide, last revised in 2003. Lafayette Public Works and Planning is currently finishing a statewide local roadway safety plan and this guide would fill in the details of that broader document. Moran noted that the information gathering technology proposed by Alldritt would complement this guide. Part of the guide will specifically state that Transportation Action Requests from residents for traffic calming will require data to support them and publicly available information gathered by the proposed technologies would greatly help citizens in their requests.

The proposals were complimented by Mayor Carl Anduri, Council Member Wei-Tai Kwok, and Council Member Susan Candell. Following a motion from Candell, the Council unanimously voted to authorize both proposals.

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