



**Independent, locally owned and operated!**

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published February 27th, 2013

## Chief Presents Annual Report

*Christensen updates city council on incidents, gadgetry and vehicles*

By Cathy Tyson

One of the highlights from Police Chief Eric Christensen's annual report to the Lafayette city council was the staggering number of alarm calls, a mind-boggling 1,748 in 2012. While the good news is that 99 percent of those were false alarms, the department has to respond to each and every one, taking officers away from their other duties. One of the chief's goals for the coming year is to lower that number.

Similarly there were 680 emergency 911 calls with a hang up; because these could be a medical emergency, an officer goes to the home to check it out. Those are just a few examples of the Lafayette police department's average of 50 calls for service per day.

Both residential burglaries and motor vehicle theft went down slightly in 2012. The chief made a point of thanking the community for reporting suspicious activity, saying it's tremendously helpful. In addition, there were 293 traffic accidents, mostly clustered around the downtown area. For those always running a little late and trying to save a few minutes by going just a little faster the police department, now with two officers on motorcycles, wrote up 1,680 citations; 93 percent of those were for moving violations.

Hankering for happy hour? Residents leaving one of Lafayette's charming watering holes should be aware there were 43 DUI arrests last year.

Notable changes for 2013 include the popular email tip line 94549Tip@gmail.com, a recently launched Facebook page-probably not a bad idea to "friend" the police-and the department's strategy for dealing with dogs on the loose. Instead of calling county animal control, police corral the wayward pooch and bring him, or her, to Pet Food Express where a chip reader scans implanted identification chips.

Recently approved by the city council are new credit card-friendly parking meters to be installed around the BART parking lot and along Mt. Diablo Boulevard from Dewing to Moraga Road. These meters still have the ability to take coins, but will also accept plastic as a convenience to drivers. Also in the works is a plan to change the meters along Plaza Way to single space meters. There will be no increase in parking rates - just an added service for drivers making parking payment a little easier.

New technology this year includes the addition of new computers in patrol cars - the former 10-year-old versions were way past their expiration dates; and iPhones that let officers quickly pass on photos to other cops on patrol and the Mobile ID device - for people who are stopped and don't have identification on them - which virtually instantaneously does a background check to see if the individual has any outstanding issues with law enforcement.

Finally, two of the six vehicles that patrol the city are showing their age; they're over six years old and have exceeded 100,000 miles, along with a Ford Taurus that is used by the city's investigator. While the city of Lafayette contracts for service from the sheriff's department, the cars and the equipment inside are the responsibility of the city. With 115,000 miles on the odometer of a 2005 Ford Crown Victoria, carburetor trouble and a trashed interior - this car will be retired, along with a 2007 Crown Victoria that shares the same issues. Although not in regular service, they will still be used by the department as decoys. "It is my experience that the act of merely placing a patrol car in an area has the effect of reducing crime in that area," said Christensen. The investigator's car will be replaced by a truck that can tow trailers and handle lots of equipment.

Knowing the fleet vehicles eventually wear out, the city has a sinking fund with a balance of \$350,000. The chief recently requested and was granted \$130,000 to pay for three replacement vehicles. The new patrol cars must be "police pursuit" certified - a big engine, spacious interior and a trunk that can hold a substantial amount of equipment. Look for a Dodge Charger, a Chevy Tahoe and an unidentified type of pick-up truck to join the fleet.

Reach the reporter at: [cathy@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:cathy@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA