

## LPD to expand presence of traffic patrol car

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the officers that were out there were probably less likely to engage the public. Probably in a lot of places that happened," Previte said. "Now you see the result of that, and the impact of that on enforcement. It's a public safety and now we see the result what doesn't happen.

"I have never seen things like this, even driving around in my police car I see things right in front of me. I see things that I've never seen them do in the years that I've been out on the road."

He recalled one pullover LPD encountered during the height of the pandemic where a driver was stopped doing more than 70 mph in a 35 mph zone. Previte recalled the driver responding "I didn't think you were doing this anymore."

Previte said that's about to change. He announced LPD's new crackdown on speeders, stop sign violations and overall aggressive driving.

"The biggest concern for me, for the residents, is obviously the safety issue, but (also) for their quality of life," he said. "We have had way more complaints that are coming into the office here on a constant basis about driving, speeding in residential areas, nobody stopping at stop signs, people weaving around in traffic, driving aggressively.

"What has really raised the red flag with me is that we've had two fatal (accidents) over the past month."

A driver from the recent Swann Road fatality went on to be charged by officers with second-degree vehicular manslaughter. He was issued an appearance ticket due to his being hospitalized.

Of LPD's forthcoming change in tactics, Previte said he wanted to give the community "a preemptive warning."

"We are stepping things up, and I'm going to instruct the officers to (do so) as well."

Previte said he's doing this in response to not only the current driver behavior, but what is anticipated in the Lewiston community with the return of concerts and events, festivals and public activities, plus the approaching return to school for children.

"My concern is not only safety – especially with the speeds and such, especially on Center Street – but the quality of life with people," Previte said. The LPD traffic car, a specially designated patrol feature, will be out in greater force. "I'm going to use that; it's a very good tool the town has afforded us to be able to address that. I'm going to use that as well as the officers (expanding their traffic enforcement responsibilities) between calls.

"The problem is specific enforcement, not general enforcement. To have them sit somewhere is hard at times because

they're going to be out handling calls. The traffic car is going to be handling calls; it's coming."

Previte said LPD's designated traffic car will not be a daily enforcement feature, but rather will "fluctuate" as to the various duty officer assignments.

"We'll try to use that according to the complaints when we get. I would encourage people when they're having an issue to call and let us know," Previte said.

While the traffic complaints LPD received have "almost doubled," "I encourage them to call, (especially) if it's in a certain area. That is what the traffic car is for," Previte said.

Calls can be directed to LPD's nonemergency number, 754-8477, during business hours; or call 911 for any emergency situation.

As far as enforcement, Previte said he envisions LPD's focus will particularly be on populated, well-established areas in the village. "Probably the biggest area for geographical complaints is in the village due to the population and the concentration of traffic there."

He said most of the speeding complaints come from neigh-

borhoods as well as Lewiston's well-traveled areas – the Center Street-Ridge Road strip, Saunders Settlement Road above the hill, and Creek Road.

Previte said he is hopeful this new response will have some effect and he encourages residents to call. But "I also want people to know that it's not realistic that we can stop this type of behavior. We try to minimize it the best we can do, and that is to minimize it by observation enforcement."

He added, "If we focus it correctly, I think it's something that we can at least tackle and get it to the point where it's not excessive like it is now. Get it back to some type of norm. I think it's a correction" to an enforcement problem.

The LPD traffic car "will be out there for traffic enforcement, and that's townwide," Previte said. "We focus that wherever we get the complaints." He noted the service should fall within the LPD budget.

For other offenses, including DWIs, Previte said LPD and partner agencies have resources to address those issues through crackdowns, designated checkpoints and the like.

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