

LOPD feeling impact of unrest, COVID

The City of Lake Ozark Police Department – like many small-town departments – has its challenges. Keeping a full staff of certified officers at a time when many officers and departments are under fire, and during a difficult budget crunch because of the impact of COVID-19, is difficult. Police Chief Gary Launderville reported to the board of aldermen recently that he lost one officer who felt the potential danger was no longer worth the loss of life or injury.

“With all of the media coverage of protests, riots and general negative news coverage of police over the past several weeks, it has hit home with some of our officers,” Launderville said. “Even though we have very strong support from our local community the things currently happening around the country have led to one officer resigning.”

He said other departments in the area are having similar issues with personnel and budgets.

“With what’s going on in our country today is going to make it even harder to get new people who want to consider a career in law enforcement,” Launderville predicted.

But there’s good news as well.

Mayor Gerry Murawski noted that the LOPD and its officers have been the recipients of a variety of gestures of kindness in the last few weeks including notes of appreciation, cases of bottled water and anonymously comped meals.

“It’s so different than what we are seeing in some of our larger cities. We certainly do appreciate it,” the mayor said. “They need all the thanks they can get.”

Visitors

Chief Launderville told the board that over recent Hot Summer Nights events on The Strip and over the Fourth of July he has visited with visitors from out of state.

“It’s amazing to hear them talk about the friendly people here, the low cost of living and the scenery,” Launderville told the board.

He asks the visitors what brought them to Lake Ozark and the Lake of the Ozarks since they had never been here before.

“It’s because their state was still on lockdown, or has very strict restrictions. And they had watched the Netflix series ‘Ozark’ or had seen all of the media coverage from Memorial Day weekend at many of the local waterfront bars, restaurants and pools.”