



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE

JAMES J. DONELON
COMMISSIONER



MEETING MINUTES

LOUISIANA AUTOMOBILE THEFT & INSURANCE FRAUD PREVENTION AUTHORITY

Wednesday, July 21, 2021

10:00 am

LDI Plaza Hearing Room

1702 North Third Street, Poydras Building
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Members present: Warren Byrd, Natalie Brunson-Wheeler, Renée Free, Kade Griffon, Thomas Jeter, David Marcantel, Barry Milligan, Lt. Michael Wilkerson

Members absent: David Clements, Rep. Mike Huval, Sen. Kirk Talbot

Staff present: John Ford, Kevin Smith, Special Agent Allen Applewhite (NICB)

Call to Order:

Chairman Byrd called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

Old Business:

Approval of April 2021 Minutes: Mr. Jeter moved to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2021, meeting. Mr. Marcantel seconded the motion. After allowing for public comment, of which there was none, the minutes were approved without objection.

Overview of NICB Data Reporting Process: Chairman Byrd asked Mr. Applewhite to provide an overview of the NICB LPR data reporting process. Mr. Applewhite gave an overview of the process and emphasized the report is only as good as the data law enforcement agencies provide.

Review of Partner LPR Issues: Mr. Smith stated that BRPD is having LPR program personnel issues. Mr. Smith also provided an update regarding several LPR participants who were previously having issues: ULL, ULM, LSU, Kenner, NSU, and SELU have been addressed, and LATIFPA should begin receiving stats from those LPRs. Ms. Free asked how they were contacted, and Mr. Ford stated they were all contacted by email and followed up with by phone.

New Business:

LATIFPA Grant Applications – EBRSO Catalytic Converter Tags: LATIFPA received three project grant requests to be presented at this meeting. Walker Police Department submitted a request for an LPR, and East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office submitted one request for an



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LPR and a separate request for catalytic converter tags. Mr. Smith introduced an idea for a partnership between LATIFPA and EBRSO for an event to provide catalytic converter tags to EBRSO as a joint pilot program aimed at addressing the recent spike in catalytic converter theft. Lt. Chad Jones of the EBRSO was present to present both of applications. Lt. Jones stated that in 2020, EBRSO conducted 42 investigations involving catalytic converter thefts, and that in the first six months of 2021 they conducted investigations on 61 thefts including instances ranging from one vehicle to an entire fleet. Lt. Jones said that the biggest obstacle law enforcement faces with catalytic converter theft is that the parts do not have serial numbers, so it can be hard to tell whether a converter that is found matches one previously stolen. The lack of a serial number also makes it easier to sell them for scrap. Lt. Jones also said that the idea with the catalytic converter tags is to do a pilot program on 150 vehicles to see if the tags deter theft or aid in recovery if stolen. Chairman Byrd asked for clarification about whether the tags are permanent, and Lt. Jones confirmed they permanently etch a number into the metal and that they are a visual deterrent. Mr. Applewhite said NICB is involved with this sort of program across the country and asked whether the kits had been priced yet and for the thought process behind 150 tags being the requested number. Mr. Smith explained that the request was for a single initial pilot event, then explained the process of applying converter tags, and briefly mentioned a public relations push around the launch of this event. Chairman Byrd asked what makes a catalytic converter valuable, and Mr. Smith stated there are several valuable precious metals in a catalytic converter. Chairman Byrd asked Lt. Jones whether it would be more effective to do a pilot program with a large lot of cars instead of individual cars since they seem to be more attractive targets. Lt. Jones said the idea was to do it at the EBRSO shop and make it available to the general public. Lt. Wilkerson asked whether the lots hit are in certain areas or are random, and Lt. Jones confirmed that it is random. Chairman Byrd stated that the application is for 150 tags at a cost of about \$1,300 and asked whether 300 tags would be more useful. Lt. Jones said 300 would give them a larger set of test vehicles for the pilot and that EBRSO could install 300 tags. Mr. Marcantel agreed that 300 tags would be better. Mr. Applewhite recommended ensuring the catalytic converter tags have a derivative VIN, year model, assembly plant, and production number. Ms. Free emphasized the importance of meeting national standards so that our program is compatible with other states across the country. Lt. Wilkerson confirmed that including at least the eight last numbers in the VIN should be enough. Mr. Marcantel moved to double the application amount from 150 to 300 and approve the application. Lt. Wilkerson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

LATIFPA Grant Applications – EBRSO LPR: Lt. Jones then presented EBRSO’s second application for a fixed LPR and talked about EBRSO’s history of LPR use, including their ability to maintain and report the data required. Mr. Marcantel moved to approve the application. Mr. Milligan seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

LATIFPA Grant Applications – Walker PD LPR: Walker PD was not in attendance at this meeting, and Mr. Milligan requested to table the application until the next meeting. Mr. Milligan moved to table the application. Mr. Jeter seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Budget Report: Mr. Ford reviewed the LATIFPA Budget Plan for the end of the 2020-2021 Fiscal Year. Mr. Ford stated that since the previous meeting, LATIFPA spent \$1,043.29 on a “Don’t Be a Victim” handout for events and \$31,850 for the Plaquemines Parish Sheriff’s Office LPR that



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE

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was approved earlier in the year. Mr. Ford stated that those items are pending payment and awaiting invoice from the vendors, and that once paid, LATIFPA will have spent \$207,750.97 of its \$227,000 budget authority for the year, which leaves LATIFPA with \$19,249.03 in unspent spending authority funding but no rollover into the next fiscal year. Mr. Ford stated that LATIFPA is starting the 2021-2021 Fiscal Year with the \$187,000 annual statutory dedication proceeds plus \$173,419.98 in the carryover account for a total of \$360,419.98.

Budget Report – LATIFPA Printing Project Approval: LATIFPA purchased 10,000 fliers for \$1,043 since the previous meeting. Mr. Ford requested approval for that expenditure. Mr. Jeter moved to approve the expenditure. Lt. Wilkerson seconded the motion, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Budget Report – Preauthorization of Operational Purchases Under \$5,000: Mr. Ford stated that in previous years, the board has preauthorized up to \$5,000 in operation spending for the year and asked for the board to approve that for the current fiscal year. Mr. Marcantel moved to preauthorize up to \$5,000 in operational spending. Mr. Milligan seconded the motion, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Marketing and External Affairs – LATIFPA Ad Campaign Proposal: Mr. Ford requested that that board discuss approving up to \$60,000 for marketing funding for the fiscal year with the plan of doing an initial spend of \$30,000 focusing on auto theft and auto burglary. Mr. Ford stated that the second \$30,000 would be used later in the year for more ads or to promote the catalytic converter event. Chairman Byrd asked that we look at incorporating a billboard ad that shows how much of each family unit's unit is going toward fraud as that has been very effective in the past. Lt. Wilkerson stated that he remembers that billboard campaign and that it was effective. Ms. Free asked whether LATIFPA would need to develop the ads or if we'd piggyback off national campaigns. Mr. Ford said LATIFPA has existing ads that can be reused, but that LATIFPA is also looking into piggybacking off an existing national campaign. Mr. Smith stated that IAATI is the organization doing the national auto theft campaign. Ms. Free asked whether the second \$30,000 would be spent prior to the next board meeting, and Mr. Ford clarified that the reason for approving the second \$30,000 now is in case LATIFPA needs to publicize the EBRSO catalytic converter event prior to the next board meeting. Ms. Free moved to approve up to \$60,000 in marketing funding for the fiscal year. Mr. Marcantel seconded the motion, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Marketing and External Affairs – Hide Lock Take Project: Mr. Ford stated he was contacted by a New Orleans resident concerned about a high instance of auto break-ins in his neighborhood. The resident suggested working with a company called Hide Lock Take to place signs in his neighborhood that would help remind residents of car safety practices. Mr. Ford stated that he is looking into how Texas funds a similar program through sponsorships. The resident, Jason Stevens, submitted a letter to the board, and Mr. Ford read excerpts from the letter, which provided an overview of the problem, information on Hide Lock Take, and a request for \$2,000 to place 120 signs in the neighborhood. Mr. Ford stated that he was told it would take between 500 and 650 signs to cover the entire city of New Orleans, which would cost \$8,000 to \$10,000. Several members of the board noted that it would be important to make sure these signs were not limited



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE

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to one specific neighborhood and that LATIFPA considers placing them across the city of New Orleans and the entire state. Mr. Milligan asked how the signs are typically placed. Mr. Ford stated that in other programs across the country, there is a partnership with the local police department to have the signs installed by the police or the city. Chairman Board stated that it may be a good idea to have the New Orleans Police Department come before the board to act as the official partner for the program. Ms. Free asked how we can make sure the signs are correctly installed. Mr. Smith stated that we could track their installation date the same way we track LPR installation dates and mentioned the opportunity to ask for funding from foundations. Chairman Byrd asked staff to contact police in areas with at least 50,000 residents to determine the interest level and to contact all the carriers in the state to determine whether they are interested in sponsoring the program.

Marketing and External Affairs – LPR Supply and Payment Procedure Improvements: Mr. Smith reviewed the plan he created and shared with NICB to help speed up the process of paying for and reimbursing the cost of LPRs. NICB had been paying for the units upfront instead of waiting until the project was complete, which meant LATIFPA could not reimburse NICB for months following their initial payment. Mr. Smith shared a process with all parties involved that will significantly shorten the amount of time between NICB's payment to the LPR vendor and LATIFPA's reimbursement to NICB. Mr. Smith also discussed conversations he's having with the LPR vendor that may result in their agreement to hold LPR trailers and cameras in stock prior to purchase, which should greatly reduce shipping and project times moving forward.

Marketing and External Affairs – School/Community Events Update: Mr. Smith provided an update on LATIFPA events. Because schools are still in COVID protocol, the only event LATIFPA recently participated in was a drive-by event for seniors that involved 380 seniors, and that LATIFPA had another senior event planned for the following week.

NICB Report and LPR Project Updates: Mr. Smith reported that Houma's LPR is completely operational, Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office repairs are done, St. Bernard Parish's project in underway, and Plaquemine would be fully operational within the next few days. Chairman Byrd reviewed the NICB report and confirmed the status of a few of the LPRs that are now up and running. Mr. Applewhite stated that we have not received any information from NOPD since they were hit with a virus a year and a half ago, and that the unit is older and may be passed its life expectancy. Chairman Byrd asked for LATIFPA staff to contact NOPD and BRPD to request that the unit be put in use or returned to LATIFPA.

There being no other business, Ms. Free moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Marcantel seconded the motion. Without objection, the meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.