

Lindmark law to help police handle stress

Rockford City Council condemns hate groups, approves loan program for tree removal

By Jeff Kolkey
Staff writer

ROCKFORD — A new law requires Illinois police academies to provide probationary officers with training to recognize signs of post-traumatic stress that they may experience on the job.



Lindmark

The law is named for the late Greg Lindmark, a widely respected Rockford Police Department officer who rose through the ranks to become deputy chief leading the detective bureau. Lindmark took his own life in February 2015 after retiring from a 26-year career.

State Rep. John Cabello, a Rockford police officer who worked with Lindmark, sponsored the law. Cabello said he hopes it will raise awareness among officers, arm them with suicide prevention strategies and warn them about the dangers of cumulative stress that can come with responding to sometimes gruesome crime and accident scenes.

Gov. Bruce Rauner signed the bill into law Friday, Cabello said.

"This law is a beautiful tribute to a man I knew and really looked up to," Mayor Tom McNamara said Monday during the Rockford City Council meeting.

McNamara proclaimed this week "Officer Greg Lindmark Memorial Law Week."

Lindmark's family was at the City Council meeting to accept the emotional proclamation.

"The responsibility of serving and protecting the citizens of the community can be very rewarding, however constant exposure to the consequences of crime and the victims involved can lead to extreme emotional stress," McNamara said. "Every year, hundreds of police officers struggle with depression, some take their own lives, or turn to alcohol or drugs while battling PTSD and cumulative stress."

State mandated training, awareness and education that could extend careers and perhaps save lives are goals of a foundation founded in Lindmark's honor by his family and fellow officers, Cabello said.

"I will not take credit for this," Cabello told Lindmark's family members, saying it was his honor to bring the proposal to the General Assembly and

their work with the foundation that won support for it.

Codemning hate

Also on Monday, Rockford aldermen Monday approved a resolution condemning "individuals and groups that seek to spread hate and division" after an anti-racism protester's death at a white nationalist rally Aug. 12 in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Heather Heyer, a 32-year-old paralegal, was killed and 19 others injured in an act of "domestic terrorism" when a man who marched with white supremacists, KKK supporters and neo-Nazis drove a Dodge Challenger into a crowd of counter protesters.

"While the City Council is resolute in its support for the free speech rights of Americans, it will not ignore or condone hate speech or violence committed by hate groups or anyone seeking to commit acts of domestic terrorism," said the resolution written by Aldermen Bill Rose, D-9, and Jonathan Logemann, D-2.

Tree removal

Aldermen also approved a tree removal loan program on Monday to help residents remove diseased, dying or

damaged trees from private property.

The program aims to help property owners who have potentially dangerous trees, but are unable to afford to have them removed.

Public Works Director Mark Stockman said the city has sent requests for qualifications out to area tree removal companies. Once the city establishes a list of qualified tree removal companies that are bonded and insured, the program can be opened to applicants.

The city will tap up to \$300,000 over three years from city Sanitation Fund reserves to provide no-interest loans to residents that can be repaid over time via water utility bills. Failure to repay the loans plus a \$50 fee risks water shut off or property liens.

Qualifying households must make less than \$70,000 a year and obtain at least two written quotes from the list of qualified companies. City staff will verify income. Staff must agree with the homeowner that the trees should be removed. For more information about the program, contact the Public Works Department 779-348-7300.

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