



Communications Department

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PRESS CONFERENCE ON MAY 21 SHOOTING

MAY 23, 2022 • COUNCIL CHAMBERS

6:30 P.M.

OPENING COMMENTS FROM MAYOR JEREMY STUTSMAN: Thank you for taking the time to come out today. The news of this horrific shooting that has devastated families and our community has hit us very hard. It is important that we gather to talk about these incidents so we can get into a healing process for our community and of the families.

Our hearts and prayers are with the Arellano Rios family. We are all praying for full recovery of those family members who remain in the hospital and we mourn the loss of their son.

During this press conference, we will have statements from the Elkhart County Prosecutor, a representative of the victims family and the Goshen Police Chief and I. We will open to questions after all statements are made. I will now turn this over to County Prosecutor Vicki Becker.

ELKHART COUNTY PROSECUTOR VICKI BECKER: Good evening everyone, I'm Vicki Becker and I'm the Prosecutor Attorney here in Elkhart County. As you are well aware our community experienced a tragedy on Saturday. Shortly after 3:20 p.m. on Saturday, May 21, the public safety communications center, which is the 911 center, received a call indicating that a shooting was taking place on Rosemarie Court here in Goshen. Now keep in mind the first thing that happens Police, Fire and EMS are dispatched, and at that time numerous different units from the Police, Fire and ambulance went to the address. At that point in time, of course the scene is not secure until the police have to do what they do. And they need to go in and they need to make sure that safety is first and that the individuals who are injured are taken care of.

Due to the concerted efforts of our local police Department, as well as our local paramedics and emergency responders, several victims pf the shooting were given immediate medical attention. As was previously released, there were two individuals that were airlifted to a Fort Wayne Hospital; there was another that was sent to a trauma center in South Bend. Unfortunately, one of the four siblings that lived in that home, who were all four the victims of the attack, did die at the scene.

Now, out of respect for privacy for this family, out of respect for the laws of the State of Indiana we are not going to be releasing the specific names because several of them are juveniles and if the family wants to release that information, they are welcome to. But at this point in time the investigation is ongoing and we do not intend to release those names. What we will tell you is that a fifth individual who was also found inside gravely injured was a gentleman by the name of David Varela Morales, 20 years old, originally from the Goshen area. He was also found gravely injured inside. He was treated at Goshen Hospital, however he succumbed to his injuries and he passed away.

There will not be details at this point in time regarding the roles of any individuals involved and what occurred. However we can tell you, as we did on Saturday, that there is no further risk of any individuals being injured, as preliminary information does indicate that Mr. Varela Morales was the shooter. The purpose of the immediate response was to quell community fears about an ongoing emergency. And so we did that so you would understand that the public was not at any further risk.

However, again, I urge you to please respect the privacy of this family as they continue to grieve and they continue to heal as there are individuals in this family that are still suffering significantly. The Arellano Rios family does have family here and I understand that they would like to make a very brief statement but I would please ask to be professional and be respectful of their privacy. Thank you.

At this point in time the investigation is still ongoing. The Elkhart County homicide unit in conjunction with the Goshen Police Department has done and is continuing this investigation, and until every bit of it is completed, further details of the investigation will come out. Thank you.

At this time, I'd like to invite up Mr. Sean Pound, who is the step-father to the children involved in this and then after that we'll have our Youth Adviser to the City Council Adrian Mora, who is also connected to the family both with statements.

SEAN POUNDS, FAMILY MEMBER: I thank everybody for being here. Hi, I'm Sean Pounds, I'm the step-father in this tragedy that happened Saturday. I understand a lot of you have questions right now. I just ask for respect and we will get answers, but right now we have a great crew that is working on that and when they get answers, we'll get answers but until then please let my family heal.

ADRIAN MORA, FAMILY FRIEND: Hi, my name is Adrian Mora and I'm a close friend to the family and one thing I'd like to mention to the community is that some support that the family would like to receive is fundraising, and there is a fundraiser on Facebook to cover funeral costs for Richard Rios. If you would donate to that fundraiser it would greatly help. Thank you.

MAYOR JEREMY STUTSMAN: We want to acknowledge the escalating crime we are seeing in our community and also give you some ideas of what we are doing to try and combat that.; We've beein working on it for quite some time.

As we have all witnessed in our community, violent crimes are on the rise. And sadly, as we see it happening in our country, it's come to our community. As a community we need to support our police and public safety network. we need to come together to create an impenetrable support system in order to be prepared to help those in the most need when it comes to behavioral and mental health issues.

My administration is committed to continuing to build a support network of mental and behavioral health resources.

The Goshen City Council and I have appropriated \$900,000 for the development of a new mental health program and we are doing this through Oaklawn Psychiatric Center, as the development of this program moves forward we will be sharing more with our community. We have also taken an additional \$300,000 to help several nonprofit in our area to again boost recourse to those who have a need.

This year we Goshen Police Chief Miller and my Office have worked to create and implement a new position in the Goshen Police Department. Officer Ballard is serving as our new Mental and Behavioral Health Coordinator for GPD.

For years Goshen PD has placed heavy emphasis on Critical Incident Training (CIT). We now have 25 officers certified in this training. This helps them to better identify and respond to individuals that are having a mental or behavioral mental crisis.

Some of the escalation in violence in our community has been connected with gang activity. This is something we've been talking about in several public meetings and also in public forums That is why the Goshen Police Derpamrtne have been working hard over the last year connecting with churches, schools, residents and other community leaders to discuss the escalation of gang activity and try to find a path in which we can get ahead of it. We have been functioning as a task force unofficially, but we are officially solidifying that group in the next weeks.

We as a community will find a way to support each other so we can avoid the anger and aggression that appears to be growing across our community and country. As a community do not want to see anymore of these devastating murders. Our families, our community and our youth deserve better.

Goshen City Council and I will continue to provide resources to the men and women of the Goshen Police Department for equipment, further trainings and staff needed to continue serving our community.

Since 2016 the City Council and I have added \$2.1 million to the annual budget of the Goshen Police Department. We will continue to find resources as needed to make sure they can serve this community to the best of their ability.

I am grateful every day to have the opportunity to serve alongside GPD and the rest of the City staff. Finally, we ask for the community's support and prayers as we continue important and necessary work as we move forward in our community.

GOSHEN CHIEF OF POLICE JOSE' MILLER: Good evening, I'm Jose Miller. I'm the Chief of Police here in Goshen. First of all I want to extend my heart broken condolences to the family. I can't imagine what they're going through at this time. It's sad to see something like this happen in our community or any other community.

I've seen a few things that have been posted publicly that I'd like to clear up. One was stating that this had to do with gang activity. There is no indication of gang activity. And I feel that comments like that can cast a shadow on a family that is already going through a lot of things and lot of emotions. I would just request that the community just—before they put out any information publicly, make sure it's accurate, and make sure it's not going to hurt families, cause more pain or grief.

Even the resources from the police department, there were some comments about how the mayor doesn't support the police in doing their job, and that's not the case either. The Mayor and the council have always supported the Police Department and I thank them greatly for what they give us.

So I just caution people on the social media end of it. When it comes to crime, yes—there is no secret that crime has risen in our nation over the last few years. Just from 2020 to 2021, it's been estimated a 50 percent increase in homicides nationwide. City violence has also increased, unfortunately. I wish that it hasn't, but it has, specifically in shooting incidents.

For instance, this year so far since December 2021 we've had 19 acts of gun violence, 5 injuries, 4 deaths, 3 adults arrested, 4 juveniles arrested, 5 residents shot at, and 3 instances of vehicles being shot at.

There has been a decrease in other crimes, but these are crimes that jeopardize so many innocents that in their path. And the problem we encounter at the Goshen Police Department is we don't get a lot of cooperation on a lot of these things. We don't get a lot of information on a lot of these things. So we're already behind the ball. It makes our jobs very difficult.

And I've seen comments about how it's an immigration issue, it's a race issue, it's an ethnicity issue. No, this is a community issue. This is a community issue that has nothing to do with any of that. And until our country comes together and stops being divided, we will not fix this problem. We all need to come together and come up with a solution to get our community back on track. We are here to support our youth, support young people, and give them guidance on what being an adult should be like.

And until our country does that, we're going to keep battling this. And this goes all the way up to the top. So I request that communities come together, start looking at these, start looking at avenues for these young people and start showing them the way that we were shown and the way that a proper person should live and treat people. We need to get back to respecting the world.

Goshen is still a safe place. I would let my kids live here—they do live here. I'm not worried about the safety of my children. I will say, a lot of these events are targeted. It's not random acts against just somebody walking down the street. The problem is, it's targeted with innocent people in the way, and that's what's dangerous.

I just hope that you are a part of that team, that we can bring our community together and start coming up with some actual solutions. Put our opinions aside, put our differences aside and put

our politics aside, and get down to the point of what our community is facing, and that is these violent acts and harm to our kids, and lets fix that—lets focus on that.