

## EDITORIAL

# Investigation of shooting is on the mark

Few events are as serious as an officer-involved shooting. Law enforcement personnel are supposed to protect us, the public. When they harm us instead, a full accounting is in order. For the officer, a shooting, particularly a fatal shooting, can be career threatening. For these reasons, there are special protocols for handling such incidents.

So it is reassuring to see how Plumas County's law enforcement community has approached the fatal shooting in June of a Quincy man, Dennis Jason Majewski, by Plumas County Sheriff's Deputy Tom Froggatt.

In a lengthy and detailed report released last week, Plumas County District Attorney Dave Hollister found that Froggatt was completely justified in his actions. "The overwhelming credible evidence shows Deputy Froggatt acted in self-defense and in defense of others," Hollister wrote. "I think he saved not only his own life, but a number of lives in that trailer park."

Particular praise should go to Jeff Wilkinson, investigations supervisor for the district attorney's office, who authored the report. He was aided by DA Investigator Jessica Beatley and California Highway Patrol Officers Josh Cavolt, Terry Dunn and Jeff Rood.

The investigators interviewed more than two dozen witnesses, some of whom Feather Publishing also interviewed. Their comments were consistent and painted a clear scene of a man full of alcohol and drugs and armed with a long knife and a hammer on a rampage through a trailer park.

According to multiple witnesses, Majewski repeatedly refused to comply with Froggatt's demands that he put down his weapons. Majewski continued to come toward Froggatt, who retreated multiple times until he was cornered. Asked if, at the time of the shooting, he believed Majewski would kill or injure him or the man Froggatt had detained in his patrol car, Froggatt told investigators, "Absolutely. I had an unsecured subject handcuffed, defenseless, sitting at my patrol car, and I felt I had no place to go with the threats he was making."

Asked if he considered using his Taser instead of his gun, Froggatt said, "I don't believe it was appropriate based on his behavior, and seeing some sort of weapon, weapons — one in each hand. I didn't feel it was an appropriate decision to draw my Taser."

Hollister invited Feather Publishing reporter Dan McDonald to view the evidence, including crime scene and autopsy photos and a video taken with the victim's own surveillance camera. The video proved a crucial piece of evidence, which took concerted interagency collaboration to retrieve. The DVR was badly burned in the fire that destroyed Majewski's trailer shortly after he was shot, but CalFire officers John Berglund and Shane Vargas thought the internal mechanism might be intact. From there, DA investigators used Bullet Information Technology Solutions of Quincy to retrieve the hard drive, which still could not be viewed because of encryption issues. Investigators then enlisted the help of Dave Preston from Plumas County's information technology department. He determined that a similar brand of DVR was needed to view any recordings. Investigators then purchased the same brand of DVR and, with Preston's help again, were able to view the recordings. Among other things, the video showed Majewski drinking and taking drugs for most of the day, sharpening a knife and slashing and cutting at things inside his trailer.

The Plumas County Sheriff's Office, which did not partake in the investigation — when there is an officer-involved shooting, that officer's agency cannot conduct the necessary investigation — has a chance to respond to the district attorney's report.

In our eyes, the only appropriate response is, "Thank you for a job well done."

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