

CPD releases body-cam footage of bus stop shooting

BY TOM BODUS
Editor in Chief

CALEXICO – Body-cam footage released Tuesday from a fatal officer-involved shooting on June 14, 2021, indicates the incident leading to 65-year-old Manuel Rojas Barajas’ death esca-

lated very quickly, although the city’s Police Department it is not ready to say whether it needed to.

Calexico Police responded to a 911 call about 6:11 p.m. reporting that two men were engaged in an argument at the bus stop at

Third Street and Paulin Avenue. The caller, who spoke in Spanish, said that one of the men, later identified as Barajas, was armed with a knife and was threatening the other man. She said she and her husband had been waiting at the stop and left

because the argument had turned “ugly.”

Once police arrived at the scene, they reportedly found Barajas armed with a knife and a male victim who had suffered a laceration.

CPD posted body-cam

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This screenshot is from body-cam footage the Calexico Police Department released Tuesday of an officer-involved shooting that took place June 14, 2021, at Third Street and Paulin Avenue. Calexico resident Manuel Rojas Barajas, 65, was killed in the incident. COURTESY PHOTO

Mid-Winter Fair returns to the Valley



This Feb. 21 photo shows carnival equipment that had been installed at that point in preparation for the 2022 California Mid-Winter Fair & Fiesta. The fair opens today at 3 p.m. at the Imperial Valley Fairgrounds in Imperial. PHOTO CORISSA IBARRA

BY STAFF REPORT

IMPERIAL – Today, for the first time in two years, there is a county fair going on at the county fairgrounds.

Although public access to the 2022 California Mid-Winter Fair & Fiesta won’t be available until the front gates open at 3 p.m., there will be plenty of activity on the grounds before then with small animal and livestock exhibitions starting at 9 a.m. and running into the early evening.

Although most of the activities for this year’s edition of the fair will be limited to outdoor venues, that will be a considerable improvement over last year, when there wasn’t a fair at all due to the pandemic. There were a couple of drive-thru food festivals in the parking and a market livestock event with very limited admittance on the grounds, but definitely no games, vendors or entertainers.

The 2020 California Mid-Winter Fair was the very last one held in the state before the governor issue statewide stay-at-home

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‘We could take some damn responsibility’

Newsom proposes mental health courts for homeless people

BY DON THOMPSON AND JANIE HAR
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO – California’s governor unveiled a plan Thursday to create mental health courts in every county, allowing treatment for more homeless people with severe mental health and addiction disorders but also compelling some of them into care, a move that many advocates of homeless people oppose as a violation of civil rights.

Gov. Gavin Newsom said at a press conference that he has no intention of rounding people up and locking them away. Instead, he said his plan would offer a way for people to get court-ordered psychiatric treatment, medication and housing, preferably before they are arrested.

Under the plan, which requires approval by the Legislature, all counties would have to set up a mental health branch in civil court and provide comprehensive and community-based treatment to those suffering from debilitating psychosis. People need not be homeless to be evaluated by a court.

But if approved, they

would be obligated to accept the care or risk criminal charges, if those are pending, and if not, they would be subject to being held in psychiatric programs involuntarily or lengthier conservatorships in which the court appoints a person to make health decisions for someone who cannot.

“There’s no compassion stepping over people in the streets and sidewalks,” Newsom told reporters at a briefing at a mental health treatment facility in San Jose. “We could hold hands, have a candlelight vigil, talk about the way the world should be, or we could take some damn responsibility to implement our ideas and that’s what we’re doing differently here.”

Newsom, a Democrat and former mayor of San Francisco, has made homelessness and housing a focus of his administration. Last year, the Legislature approved \$12 billion for new housing and treatment beds for the homeless and this year Newsom has proposed an additional \$2 billion, primarily to shelter people suffering from psychosis, schizophrenia and other behavioral health disorders.

It was not immediately clear how much the program might cost, although Newsom proposed in his budget this year more money for mental health services. He has called distressing behavior on the streets heartbreaking and maddening and says residents are right to complain that government is not doing enough.

People with addiction



California Gov. Gavin Newsom (center) helps clean a homeless encampment alongside a freeway on Jan. 12 in San Diego. California’s governor proposed a plan on Thursday to force homeless people with severe mental health and addiction disorders into treatment. GREGORY BULL/AP

issues or mental health disorders often pinball among various public agencies, namely hospitals, court and jail. There is no one place that manages the person’s health, offering steady and safe housing combined with resource intensive care and California, like the rest of the country, suffers from a shortage of treatment beds.

Cities and states across

the country are grappling with growing homelessness, as well as mental health crises. Nearly a quarter of California’s estimated 161,000 unhoused residents have a severe mental illness, according to a 2020 count of homeless people required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Nationally, the figure was just over 20% of an estimated 580,000

unhoused residents.

Newsom’s plan could apply to an estimated 7,000 to 12,000 people, said Dr. Mark Ghaly, secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency.

Compare that to just over 200 people forced into court-ordered treatment last year under Laura’s Law, a program for people with severe and persistent mental illness

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