

Thank you all for being here. I am here to announce that our review of the tragic shooting that happened at the Punta Gorda Police Department on August 9, 2016 during a Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce citizen's academy has been completed.

Officer Lee Coel, during a role play scenario, shot and killed citizen Mary Knowlton.

I want to first again send my condolences to the family of Mary Knowlton. As we have gone through this process, we met with Mary's husband and we have advised his counsel that we are moving forward on this case. The Knowlton family is dealing with a tremendous loss and we wanted to make sure they are informed.

My office has thoroughly reviewed the evidence and many facts and circumstances involving this incident. This has been a very labor intensive process and has involved a lot of investigative work.

We are charging Punta Gorda Police Officer Lee Coel with one count of Manslaughter with a Firearm which is a First Degree Felony.

We are also charging Punta Gorda Police Chief Tom Lewis with one count of Culpable Negligence which is a Second Degree Misdemeanor.

As this is an active criminal case, I cannot discuss the evidence.

I can however tell you there is a very voluminous amount of information we reviewed. We looked at the crime scene, photographs and videos of the incident. We went through a large volume of investigative material from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. Further, many people were interviewed to help best illustrate what happened at the scene as well as what led to this turn of events.

Looking at the totality of the facts and evidence brought our office to this decision. I know many of you have contacted us daily for updates. I appreciate your patience as this case required us to review not just what happened on the day of the shooting but also many other events that played a part in what happened the day of the incident.

As you are aware, as we move forward on this prosecution, because of Florida's open public record laws, we will be able to provide a more complete picture of the vast amount of information we reviewed.

I also want to thank the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for the hard work they have put into this investigation.

To the citizens of Charlotte County I want to say that while my office is endeavoring to responsibly address this difficult, somewhat unique, tragic event, Charlotte County continues to be well served by its law enforcement community.