

# A shooting reverberates

**Randy Stapilus/Ridenbaugh Press**

What's indisputable about the shooting incident north of Council is the assessment by Lieutenant Governor Brad Little, that, "It's an absolute tragedy."

Try to get a lot more specific than that, and you rapidly find questions outnumbering answers - and that is a problem. We only know part of what happened that night.

Little told the Idaho Statesman, "The issue is the attorneys for the Yantis family are going out and painting a picture, and the sheriff's deputies, the sheriff, the Attorney General's Office, the State Police have got protocols that they've got to follow. And nature abhors a vacuum."

And so does political discussion.

The clear part of the case is that in the evening of November 1 a motorist collided on Highway 95 north of Council with a large bull. Neither emerged well; the humans were taken to a hospital, and the bull's leg was shattered. Two Adams County Sheriff's deputies arrived at the scene, and the bull's owner, Jack Yantis, was asked to come by to put the bull down. Not long after he and family members arrived, he was shot to death. His wife had a heart attack and also was hospitalized.

The Yantis family, through an attorney, has as Little noted provided a description of the missing pieces of the story.

On Tuesday night Adams County Sheriff Ryan Zollman spoke to a crowd of about 300 (that's more than a third of Council's population), but said he himself lacked answers to many of the questions, since the investigation is being run mainly through the Idaho State Police.

He didn't name the two deputies involved (figuring out who they are probably wouldn't be hard in such a small county anyway) but did say both were experienced, one with five years in law enforcement, the other with 15. So much for the "couple of wet-behind-the-ears rookies" theory.

Body cameras have been issued to officers in the county, which raises the hope that the incident may have been fully captured - exactly the kind of incident where cameras could help establish just what did happen. But Zollman said he didn't know if the officers were wearing them.

They keynote comment, though, the one explaining why 300 people in such a small town showed up and felt the way they did, may have come from the member of the audience who said this:

"If you're so committed to the safety of the community, then why am I so scared?"

The tragic nature of what happened is obvious, and there are good reasons for questioning what the deputies did and why they did it. That's one argument for the Idaho State Police and others investigating to share with the public as much information as they can, as soon as they can.

Because there's also this: The news media has been full of reports in recent months about law enforcement shootings and violence around the country, and Council is one of those places where the message goes forth on a very regular basis, from media, organizations and politicians, that government isn't to be trusted.

The Council shooting probably is more an aberration of some kind than part of a pattern. If that's the case, and state officials want to make that point, they should waste no time releasing the results of their investigation.

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