



Ohio Attorney General's Office  
Bureau of Criminal Investigation  
Investigative Report



2022-0310  
Officer Involved Critical Incident – 913 Lebanon Street, Monroe,  
Ohio (L)

**Investigative Activity:** Interview with Officer  
**Involves:** Michelle Berling (W)  
**Date of Activity:** 03/17/2022  
**Activity Location:** West Chester Township Police Department – 9577 Beckett Road,  
West Chester, OH 45069, Butler County  
**Author:** SA Steven Seitzman

**Narrative:**

On March 17, 2022 at approximately 1003 hours, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) Special Agents Richard Ward (SA Ward) and Steven Seitzman (SA Seitzman) interviewed West Chester Township Police Officer Michelle Berling (Officer Berling) regarding her involvement as a crisis negotiator on February 11, 2022, at 120 Bluegrass Lane in the City of Monroe. Officer Berling was identified as a witness via body-worn camera footage from Monroe PD Captain David Chasteen that was provided to BCI. The details below summarize the pertinent portions of the recorded interview and are not a verbatim account unless noted by quotations.

Officer Berling advised agents of the following:

Officer Berling has been employed by the West Chester Township Police Department (West Chester PD) since 2002. She is currently assigned to the West Chester PD Criminal Investigations Section as an Intelligence Analyst. She also has an ancillary assignment as a crisis negotiator and has held that role for three or four years. She advised West Chester PD and Monroe PD have a combined S.W.A.T. team, which also includes the Crisis Negotiation Team.

Officer Berling advised on February 11, 2022, at approximately 1530 hours, her supervisor, Sergeant Doug Farris, requested she respond to 120 Bluegrass Lane to assist Monroe PD with a barricaded subject. She responded with another West Chester PD crisis negotiator, Officer Ernie Malott (Officer Malott).

Upon arrival, Officer Berling was briefed by Monroe PD Lieutenant Alicia Beacock (Lt. Beacock). Lt. Beacock advised Dustin Booth (Booth) was inside the residence experiencing a mental breakdown. Lt. Beacock explained Monroe PD officers placed Booth's cell phone on his front porch; however, he had not retrieved it. Lt. Beacock further advised Monroe PD officers observed Booth with a pistol holstered on his hip.

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Officer Berling reviewed Booth's Facebook page and noticed he was a hunter, so she assumed he had access to more weapons. She confirmed with Booth's family members that he had multiple weapons inside the residence. She also found out from Booth's family that he was admitted to the Middletown Atrium Medical Center in early February for psychological issues. She advised he was in the hospital for a week, but after he returned home he quit taking his medications. She was also informed he started using THC vaping devices.

Officer Berling contacted the Middletown Atrium Medical Center in an attempt to obtain more information on Booth's prior hospitalization. She was not provided much information; however, she described Booth's behavior to Vaniska Thomas (Ms. Thomas), who is the manager of the Behavioral Health Center. Ms. Thomas advised Booth needed to be "placed on a hold."

Officer Berling advised she could hear Booth yelling inside his residence. She could also see lights going on and off. At this point, Officer Malott developed a plan to widen the perimeter in hopes Booth would take his cell phone from the porch. Marked Monroe PD units moved away from the residence, and Booth went outside and got his cell phone at approximately 1720 hours.

Officer Berling attempted to call Booth several times. He finally answered on the third call. She described his demeanor as delusional and seemed to have a "God complex." She stated he rambled during the entire conversation. He commented, "Your bullets can't hurt me." He wanted a person who looked like him, but spoke Chinese to send his message to China. He also wanted to talk to President Joe Biden. At some point, he became agitated with Officer Berling and requested the "smarter male version" of her. She advised the conversation ended after approximately seven minutes, and she never spoke with him again.

Officer Berling advised she and Officer Malott attempted to call Booth several times, with no success. Eventually, Booth called them and spoke with Officer Malott. She stated Officer Malott was on the phone with him for approximately eight minutes; however, the conversation was similar to hers. Booth became angry with Officer Malott and hung up.

Officer Berling advised the need for negotiators ended. She stated she was aware that Monroe PD planned to back out and leave a "loose perimeter." Both, she and Officer Malott left the scene.

On February 12, 2022, Sergeant Farris requested Officer Berling complete a statement regarding her involvement in the incident. She completed a statement, a signed copy of which was provided to BCI.

The interview was concluded at approximately 1014 hours. See the attached audio recording and written statement from Officer Berling for more information.

#### **Attachments:**

Attachment # 01: 2022-03-17 / Michelle Berling Interview

Attachment # 02: Michelle Berling Written Statement

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# **Exhibit 1**

**Included as a separate file.**

## **Exhibit 2**

2/13/2022

Assist Department – Monroe PD

P.O. M. Berling 168 West Chester Police Department

On 2/13/2022 at approximately 15:30hrs, I was requested to respond to 120 Bluegrass Ln. in Monroe, OH with Officer Ernie Malott to assist at a scene as negotiators. Upon my arrival, I made contact with Monroe Lt. Beacock. She explained the situation and advised the person in crisis was Dustin Booth and he did not currently have a phone. They had placed Mr. Booth's cell phone on the front porch in an attempt to make contact with him. I asked if anyone knew what types of weapons he may have. I was told he had a pistol in a holster on his hip and access to another pistol. I advised the Monroe officers I had reviewed Mr. Booth's Facebook page and it appears he may be a hunter. This made me think there may be other guns in the house other than pistols. Monroe PD spoke with Mr. Booth's family who confirmed he does have rifles in the house.

I asked Lt. Beacock if she knew who Mr. Booth's doctor was and any medications he may be taking. She obtained that information stating his doctor was Dr. Lazar from the Atrium Behavior Health Unit. Mr. Booth had been admitted for a manic episode February 1–7, 2022. On February 1, 2022, the Butler County Mobile Crisis Unit convinced Mr. Booth to go to the Atrium Hospital. When he arrived, he became violent in the emergency room and had to be restrained. Lt. Beacock was told by Mr. Booth's family he currently is not taking his medication and has been vaping THC. I contacted the Atrium Medical Center and spoke with Vaniska Thomas who is the manager of the Behavioral Health Unit at the Atrium (513) 974-6038. I told her what the situation was. She said Dr. Lazar is not working currently but there was an on call doctor working. She asked if the Butler County Mobile Crisis Unit was on the scene. I told her they were not but I would see about getting them contacted. After hearing what was going on with Mr. Booth, Vaniska stated she was scared for Mr. Booth, scared for us and said Mr. Booth needed to be put on a hold for a mental evaluation. I explained to her Mr. Booth has made no threats to anyone or himself. She obtained my cell number so she could talk to a doctor and call me back. I advised Monroe PD the conversation I had with Vaniska Thomas. Lt. Beacock reached out to the Butler County Mobile Crisis Unit to have them respond. They were enroute to a crisis in another jurisdiction then would head to our location.

West Chester Officer Malott made a suggestion to see about widening the perimeter so Mr. Booth could not see all the marked police cruisers around him in the hopes he would come out on the porch and retrieve his cell phone. This was done and Mr. Booth did come out and get his cell phone around 17:20hrs. I immediately attempted to call his cell phone. He did not answer the first two attempts. He answered on the third attempt. Mr. Booth was talking rapidly with disorganized thoughts. He seemed very agitated, and was having delusions. I was not able to say much due to his continuous talking. I listened to him for about 7 minutes then he hung up the phone. He called the negotiator phone back around 17:45hrs. Officer Malott spoke with him for about 8 minutes before Mr. Booth hung up the phone. We made multiple attempts to reach back out to Mr. Booth but he would not answer the phone. We later learned he was talking to other family and friends. We continued to attempt contact with Mr. Booth. At 18:13hrs, Officer Malott called and Mr. Booth answered. Mr. Booth acted as if he thought someone else had called him. When he realized it was Officer Malott, he hung up the phone.

Vaniska from the Atrium called me back. I advised her the Butler County Mobile Crisis Unit had responded. She once again stated Mr. Booth needed to be placed on a hold but understood at this time there were no direct threats made by him.

Officer Malott and I were released from the scene just after 19:00hrs.

*P.O. M. Berling #168*