



# BCPO News

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**July 8, 2021**

## **Mount Laurel Man Charged with Bias Intimidation Faces New Accusations of Damaging Vehicles, Stalking a Neighbor**

Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina and Mount Laurel Township Police Chief Stephen Riedener announced today that a Mount Laurel man arrested earlier this week for bias intimidation of his neighbors has been charged with damaging the property of his victims, stalking and narcotics violations, among other crimes.

Edward C. Mathews, of the 3600 block of Gramercy Way, was charged today with two counts of Criminal Mischief (Third Degree), Possession of a Weapon (Slingshot) For an Unlawful Purpose (Third Degree), Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance (Third Degree), Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance with Intent to Distribute (Third Degree), Stalking (Fourth Degree), two counts of Certain Persons Not to Have Weapons (Fourth Degree) and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia (Disorderly Persons).

“These new charges underscore the importance of our community members coming forward with any information they have about criminal activity, whether about this case or any other incident,” Chief Riedener said. “Because someone recorded Mathews’ conduct on Friday night, we had the evidence to bring the previous charges, and the opportunity to gather the evidence that led to these additional charges, including for damage we allege he recently caused to his neighbors’ vehicles.”

Mathews is presently in Burlington County Jail in Mount Holly, where he was lodged on Monday after being taken into custody at his residence. He was initially charged on the night of July 2, and then again on July 5, with a total of three counts of Harassment – Bias Crime with Purpose to Intimidate (Fourth Degree), two counts of Harassment and one count of Trespass (Disorderly Persons) stemming from two confrontations with neighbors involving racial slurs and using threatening language and gestures.

The investigation began July 2 after a resident came to the Mount Laurel Police Department to file a harassment complaint against Mathews. A short time later on the same date, a Mount Laurel police officer responded to a Coventry Way residence on a report of a male needing to be removed from the area. Upon arrival, the officer found Mathews in a verbal altercation with four residents. Mathews, who was using racial slurs, was sent to his residence in an attempt to de-escalate the situation. The ensuing investigation resulted in Mathews being charged later that night for both incidents.

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The Mount Laurel Police Department requested that the charges be placed on a warrant, which would have allowed officers to take Mathews into custody and place him in jail. However, this request was denied by the Municipal Court judge who approved the charges, which were instead placed on a summons and prevented the defendant from being placed behind bars.

Mathews was ultimately arrested when the Prosecutor's Office brought further charges after reviewing an additional video recording of the confrontation that showed Mathews bumped one of the victims with his chest and appeared to spit in his face. Those charges were placed on a warrant, which allowed officers to take him into custody.

The charges being announced today were filed following a search of Mathews' residence by the Mount Laurel Police Department. The warrant authorizing the search was approved after the Mount Laurel Police Department applied for an Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) against Mathews. An ERPO prohibits the subject of that Order from possessing any firearms.

The ERPO was issued based on the implied threat of the use of weapons Mathews made to neighbors. One of the victims of the harassment charges reported to police that she suspected Mathews had used a BB gun to damage vehicles belonging to her and her daughter.

Seized as a result of the search were a slingshot and multiple ball bearings, which matched the projectiles used to damage the vehicles. The investigation revealed that Mathews had fired the ball bearings at two vehicles belonging to his female neighbors, causing \$2,350 in damage. He is also accused of stalking one of the vehicle owners. Also seized were numerous psilocybin mushrooms, which are known for their hallucinogenic effect, along with packaging materials.

The Prosecutor's Office has petitioned the Superior Court to keep Mathews incarcerated while his charges are adjudicated. A detention hearing that had been scheduled for tomorrow has been postponed due to the additional charges filed against him. The new hearing will likely be rescheduled for Tuesday, July 13.

The Prosecutor's Office is undertaking an independent review of all previous incidents reported to Mount Laurel police involving this defendant, as well as reviewing the department's actions when responding to the call for assistance on July 2.

Prosecutor Coffina said investigators are very appreciative of the public's assistance.

"Our office will continue to investigate the previously reported complaints lodged against Mr. Mathews," Prosecutor Coffina said. "We urge anyone with information and/or evidence of criminal conduct to contact us at [tips@co.burlington.nj.us](mailto:tips@co.burlington.nj.us), or 609-265-5035."

*All persons are considered innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.*

**END**