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FEATURED

BREAKING

Man sentenced to 10 years for 2019 shooting

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Michael Chavis

Haley Jones

The trial of a Lancaster man accused of murder in a 2019 shooting death began and ended Monday with a guilty plea.

Michael C. Chavis Jr., 33, pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and possession of a firearm during the commission of a violent crime in the death of Jamal Gladden, 26.

Chavis was sentenced to 10 years in prison on Monday, Feb. 13.

Chavis was attending a late-night party on Feb. 9, 2019, when witnesses said they saw him open an exterior door and shoot Gladden, who was standing outside the Arch Street home, according to a Lancaster Police Department release.

“He pled to voluntary manslaughter, which is considered a most serious offense in South Carolina,” said Lisa Collins, 6th Circuit chief deputy solicitor. “He will have to do 85% of that sentence, which is much better than the usual either 25% or 33%.”

Collins said Chavis did not take the stand, and entered his guilty plea before the trial or jury selection began. However, the victim’s family was present and gave statements.

“His mother spoke, as well as his two sisters,” Collins said. “And of course, they were all heartbroken over the loss of him (Gladden) at such a young age.”

Collins said Gladden’s mother particularly expressed that she had agreed to the plea agreement for Chavis to enter a plea to voluntary manslaughter for a negotiated sentence of 10 years in prison.

Chavis will enter the Kirkland prison facility while the S.C. Department of Corrections works to find his permanent location to serve his sentence. This process requires an analysis of his criminal record, which includes possession, manufacture and distribution of multiple drugs and multiple counts of assault and battery and resisting arrest.

In 2014, Chavis was sentenced to seven years in prison on drug charges, plus three years to be served concurrently for assaulting a police officer.

Collins said that with a voluntary manslaughter charge, Chavis will be held at a more restricted institution, possibly a maximum-security facility.

“Assistant Solicitor Mike Burch and I worked many months on this case,” Collins said. “Throughout the process, we consulted very closely with the family of the victim. Decisions to work out a plea agreement on a case of this nature are always difficult.

“In this case, we have issues in regard to the lack of cooperation of our witnesses. Quite frankly, when citizens are eyewitnesses to a violent crime, they are often scared to tell the police what they saw and scared to come to court. Unfortunately, this compromises the ability of the prosecution to seek the longest possible sentence period. We are grateful for the citizens who did cooperate, as that is necessary to stop and prevent further crimes in our community.”

Haley