

Officers Return to Work After Fatal Shooting

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Three officers—two Ashe deputies and a West Jefferson officer—have returned to work after being on administrative leave after a fatal shooting November 19th. Sheriff James Williams returned Deputies Joshua Hopkins and Jeremy Munday to work last Saturday, while Officer Jake Howell returned to his post at the West Jefferson Police Department Sunday, the three involved in the fatal shooting of Mark Houck after responding to the call and firing the shots that killed the 47-year old Laurel Springs man. Four officers responded to the call about a man firing a gun off of his porch on Gaither Poe Road late the night of Nov. 19. The original press release said “The officers identified themselves, and ordered the man to put down his weapon. Houck refused to comply, and began pointing the weapon at the officers. The officers fired their weapons, striking and killing the subject.” Deputy Brandon Howell from the Ashe County Sheriff’s Office also responded to the shots fired call but was not placed on administrative leave. The officers have been returned to duty in spite of the SBI not releasing any information on the status of their investigation into the shooting. The DA is yet to determine if the shooting was justified or if charges will be filed.