

Defendants in deadly Rio Dell hash lab case to be released on probation



Tamara Paul (left), David Paul (top right) and Arron Mohr (bottom right)

By [Will Houston](#), *Eureka Times-Standard*

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The three people charged in the November 2016 hash lab explosion at a Rio Dell home that resulted in the death of 21-year-old Xavier Renner are set to be released from custody after a judge sentenced them all to probation this morning.

Humboldt County Superior Court Judge John Feeney said that the probation sentences for Arron Mohr, 24, David Paul, 38, and David Paul's wife Tamara Paul, 33, were in large part based on the wishes of Renner's family who requested leniency.

Renner's aunt Veronica Beaumont addressed the court during Mohr's sentencing. She said she helped raise Renner, an only child, since he was born, and that he was given a good life. She said Mohr and Renner were friends from San Diego who "both chose their own path" and ultimately made a bad decision when they decided to begin manufacturing butane hash oil in the Pauls' garage on the 100 block of First Avenue in Rio Dell.

“Arron Mohr, we feel, is not responsible for Xavier’s death,” Beaumont said to Feeney. “Xavier is responsible for his own death.”

The explosion occurred on the evening of Nov. 9, 2016. Renner, Mohr and 24-year-old Aaron Schisler — who is not in custody and has a warrant out for his arrest — had been operating a butane hash lab in the Pauls’ detached garage for several months. According to previous testimony from Deputy District Attorney Adrian Kamada, Schisler had told investigators on the night of the explosion that he was visiting the area, stepped outside for a cigarette and that the gas from an oven was on.

Investigators determined the garage had been used to manufacture butane hash oil. This morning, Kamada said the neighborhood looked like a “war zone” that night with multiple explosions over a 10-minute period.

Renner received burns over 42 percent of his body and died at the UC Davis Medical Center on Dec. 14, 2016. Investigators said that they found Renner with his face “burned off” and burns on other areas of his body, according to previous testimony from Kamada.

Renner’s aunt told the court this morning that Renner was healing, but died as a result of a respiratory infection as well as internal bleeding to his liver that she said was caused by the hospital when they cut into his abdomen.

Beaumont further asked Feeney to give Mohr a “second chance at life,” saying he will be carrying his own burn scars and the burden of Renner’s death for the rest of his life.

“Your leniency will give our family great comfort,” Beaumont said.

Feeney sentenced Mohr to five years of supervised probation, 500 hours of community service and about \$1,800 in fees and fines, which includes \$300 in restitution to Renner’s family. The probation department had recommended 1,000 hours of community service, according to Feeney.

Though it is not mandatory, Feeney recommended Mohr use some of those hours speaking at local high schools to share his “unfortunate experience” in the hopes that it will deter others from making the same decisions.

Mohr was also banned from owning a firearm for life.

Mohr and the Pauls were originally charged with second-degree murder for Renner’s death, but [pleaded guilty to lesser charges last month as part of a plea deal](#) with the Humboldt County District Attorney’s Office.

Mohr pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and manufacturing cannabis concentrates. A third felony charge of manufacturing a controlled substance was dismissed.

Mohr faced up to 12 years and eight months in prison, but was granted probation by Feeney based on the Renner family’s wishes. A one-year jail sentence was also covered by Mohr’s custody credits.

Kamada called for Feeney to impose a state prison sentence on Mohr to “send a message.”

Kamada said Mohr not only caused harm to Renner, but also traumatized the neighborhood and put first responders at risk on the night of the explosion.

“I think that there is a lesson to be learned by the community,” Kamada said.

Mohr’s attorney Benjamin Okin said Mohr’s case is not the type to use to set the example Kamada was requesting. Okin further said butane hash manufacturing is now legal in the regulated market. Kamada countered by saying that such activities are only allowed on industrial properties, not residential neighborhoods.

Feeney ordered Mohr to be released from the county jail today.

Mohr’s mother, father, sister and grandmother were in the courtroom seated next to Beaumont. Mohr was in the courtroom wearing an orange jail jumpsuit and was handcuffed to another inmate.

One of Mohr’s family members wiped away tears after the sentencing hearing.

When Feeney read the sentence of four years supervised probation, Tamara Paul closed her eyes and seemed to smile and cry at the same time. She had faced up to seven years and eight months in state prison after she pleaded guilty last month to involuntary manslaughter, maintaining a place to unlawfully store or manufacture controlled substances, child endangerment of her then 5-year-old daughter, and misdemeanor possession of six grams of methamphetamine and 12 grams of psilocybin mushrooms. A felony count of manufacturing a controlled substance was dismissed as part of the March plea deal.

The probation department had recommended Tamara Paul serve a prison term, but Feeney said he found there to be “unusual circumstances” because the victim’s family had requested the court not impose a prison sentence. Tamara Paul had also been previously convicted of two felony charges in 2004 including stealing her father’s gun and possession of a controlled substance for sale, according to her attorney Larry Killoran.

Again, Kamada called on Feeney to impose a prison sentence of at least four years and eight months, stating Tamara Paul was aware of the hash lab operations and helped facilitate the sales of the hash oil and cannabis trim. Kamada said Tamara Paul’s actions ultimately traumatized a neighborhood and put her 5-year-old daughter at risk.

“All of these things make her much more culpable in the lab itself,” Kamada said.

Killoran described the case as a tragedy, and said his client cooperated with investigators from the beginning.

Should the court impose a prison sentence, Killoran said, it would affect the Pauls’ two children, one of whom is 11 months old. Killoran also requested that Tamara Paul’s probation terms match those of her husband’s.

“This family needs to be reunited and need to move forward in a positive manner,” Killoran said.

Feeney is set to finalize Tamara Paul’s conditions of probation at a hearing on April 18.

Tamara Paul, who was handcuffed and dressed in a blue jail jumpsuit, smiled at people seated in the audience before she was escorted out of the courtroom.

Tamara Paul’s husband David Paul was sentenced to four years supervised probation and was ordered to attend a child abuse treatment program for at least one year. He was also ordered to pay about \$2,000 in fees and fines, including a \$300 restitution fine to Renner’s family. A one-year jail sentence was covered by David Paul’s custody credits.

Kamada did not object to the proposed sentence.

David Paul’s attorney Deputy Public Defender Luke Brownfield asked for minimal fines and fees based on the fact that his client been out of work from his truck driving job while he was in custody. Brownfield said that the recommendation for sentencing was appropriate because David Paul was unaware of the extent of the hash lab operations considering he was often out of the area for work.

David Paul had pleaded guilty in March to maintaining a place to unlawfully store or manufacture controlled substances and child endangerment. He faced up to four years and eight months in state prison.

As part of his probation terms, David Paul was also banned from owning a firearm for life.

David Paul was out of custody and stood in the courtroom wearing jeans and a vest over a white shirt.

“Mr. Paul, good luck,” Feeney said after the sentencing.

Will Houston can be reached at 707-441-0504.