

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE



THOMAS J. SPOTA
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

March 16, 2016

Drivers involved in fatal 2015 Cutchogue crash arraigned on indictment, plead not guilty to charges

UPDATE:

Pino, Carlos F. (Limo driver) – Pleaded not guilty to four charges of criminally negligent homicide, four counts of assault, failure to yield the right of way, reckless driving, turning at an intersection, failure to yield the right of way, failing to stay in a designated lane, and failing to file a required report upon an accident.

Cash bail \$50,000, Bond is \$100,000. Next court date 4/19/16.

Romeo, Steven (Pickup truck driver) – Pleaded not guilty to two counts of driving while intoxicated and one charge of driving while ability impaired by alcohol. Defendant released on his own recognizance. Next court date is 4/26/16.

March 16, 2016

Limo driver indicted on charges of criminally negligent homicide for causing fatal crash

A 58 year old limousine driver from Bethpage has been indicted by a special grand jury investigating last summer's fatal Route 48 crash in Cutchogue that claimed the lives of four of his passengers, Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota announced today.

The chauffeur, Carlos F. Pino of Old Bethpage, will be arraigned at 2 PM today before State Supreme Court Justice Fernando Camacho on four charges of criminally negligent homicide, four counts of assault, failure to yield the right of way, reckless driving and other traffic law infractions, District Attorney Spota said. Steven Romeo of Peconic, the driver of the truck that struck the limousine and was charged with DWI the day of the crash, will also be arraigned in Central Islip this afternoon before Justice Camacho. The indictment charges Romeo with two counts of driving while intoxicated and one count of driving while ability impaired by alcohol.

Citing the data collected and analyzed from the reconstruction of the crash and witness accounts, including five additional witnesses who were at the intersection at the time of the crash, District Attorney Spota said

the investigation found Pino had “limited sight lines looking into westbound traffic” because a Jeep Liberty was positioned in the intersection waiting to turn left onto Depot Lane.

“The Jeep Liberty completely blocked the limo driver’s view of the oncoming traffic in the main travel lanes,” DA Spota said. “Despite the fact that the main west bound travel lanes were not visible, the limo driver, Carlos Pino, failed to take any precaution or any action to make sure he could safely enter the westbound travel lanes.” Pino told police at the crash scene he did not see any traffic.

“There is no evidence that demonstrates he (Pino) ever came to a stop,” DA Spota said.

Because of the profile of the Jeep Liberty in the intersection, Mr. Romeo, the driver of the truck traveling at approximately 55 miles per hour westbound, did not see the limousine enter the intersection until he was approximately 200 feet away, effectively making a collision unavoidable, DA Spota explained.

“Mr. Romeo had only 200 feet to react to the hazard he saw, and stop his vehicle. Travelling at 55 mph, it would have taken 1.6 seconds to perceive the limo in his path, to realize he must apply his brakes, and then to begin braking. This would leave Romeo with even less distance - 129 feet – to avoid a crash – impossible for him to do,” DA Spota said. “In fact our experts tell us that at 55 mph it would have taken anyone 263 feet to stop and avoid the crash.”

District Attorney Spota said, “A perfectly sober Steven Romeo could not avoid this crash. An intoxicated Steven Romeo could not avoid this crash. It was simply unavoidable from Romeo’s perspective.

By law there must be a link between Romeo’s intoxication and the cause of the crash, “DA Spota explained. “Here - because the crash was unavoidable, there is no such link and the grand jury did not indict him for Vehicular Manslaughter or Criminally Negligent Homicide.”

The DA said, “Romeo can be held criminally responsible for driving while intoxicated but he cannot be held criminally responsible for the crash. The person who is criminally responsible for the crash is Carlos Pino and Carlos Pino alone. Pino failed to take any precaution or action to make sure he could safely enter the westbound traffic lanes; he continued to attempt his U-turn without stopping. Because of his actions, he failed to see the Jeep Liberty in front of him, or Mr. Romeo’s pickup converging on the intersection.”

Attending the news conference with the district attorney were the heads of the primary law enforcement agencies that participated in the collision reconstruction and crash investigation including Southold Chief of Police Martin Flatley, New York State Police Major Dave Candelaria, Suffolk County Police Detective-Sargent James Madden of the SCPD Vehicular Crime Unit, John Scott Prudenti, Chief of the SCDA Vehicular Crime Bureau and SCDA VCB Assistant District Attorney Elizabeth Miller.

SCDA COMMUNICATIONS

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Be advised that a charge is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.