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Murder charge against Amboy man dismissed in fatal shooting over video game dispute

Charges were dismissed for insufficient evidence four days before the Clark County Superior Court trial was to begin

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The Clark County Courthouse (The Columbian files)

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Prosecutors last week dismissed the [murder case against a north Clark County man accused of fatally shooting his friend in 2021](#) after an argument over a video game.

Senior Deputy Prosecutor Luka Vitasovic requested the case against Joshua G. Spellman, 34, of Amboy, be dismissed for insufficient evidence. Clark County Superior Court Judge Jennifer Snider ordered the dismissal April 17, court records show.

Spellman was charged in Superior Court with second-degree murder.

Andrew W. Dickson, 34, suffered a gunshot wound to the torso and was taken to PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center in Vancouver, where he underwent surgery. He later died from his wounds, according to court documents.

Spellman's defense attorney, Steve Thayer, said in an email to The Columbian the attorneys negotiated the case for 2½ years, and the dismissal came four days before Spellman's trial was set to begin.

Thayer said Spellman acted in self-defense, and Dickson's death was a tragedy but not a crime.

"The case is a good example of a rush to judgment where our client was arrested for murder within hours of the shooting," Thayer said in a statement. "If law enforcement had taken more time and fully investigated what happened before making the arrest, the prosecutor's office may not have decided to file the case."

Clark County sheriff's deputies were dispatched at 9:11 p.m. Dec. 16, 2021, for a report of an assault with a weapon at 43118 N.E. Cedar Mist Road, according to a sheriff's office statement.

In an interview with detectives, Spellman said he, Dickson and a third friend were playing Diablo II on an online gaming platform. Both Spellman and Dickson lived on Spellman's parent's property and were playing the game from separate dwellings on the property. The three players communicated via headset, according to an affidavit of probable cause.

Spellman said Dickson became upset after a random player entered the game and stole a valuable piece of loot that the trio hadn't been able to collect. The game should have been password protected but was not, he said. Spellman said Dickson began yelling, name-calling and cursing at him, the affidavit says.

Dickson's rant went on for several minutes, Spellman said. He became upset with Dickson and told him he needed to calm down or he was going to get shot. Spellman then took his gun and left his bunkhouse to go to the main house. He was talking to his dad when Dickson also came inside. Dickson verbally confronted Spellman about Spellman's threat to shoot him. Spellman said Dickson then "closed the distance" between them, and Spellman shot him, the affidavit says.

Dickson had known mental health issues, Thayer said, and Spellman's father said he'd never seen Dickson so angry before.

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