Richmond mayor witnessed attack by youths outside BART station

By: Filipa Loannou
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Richmond Mayor Tom Butt took photos at the scene of an attack on a man outside the Richmond BART station Thursday.
A man was assaulted by a group of youths just outside the BART station in Richmond on Thursday, police said.

An attack on a man outside the BART station in Richmond this week had an influential witness who was not pleased with what he saw — city Mayor Tom Butt.

Butt said two BART employees sat in a nearby truck and watched the assault Thursday morning, apparently doing nothing, as the victim was beaten and kicked by a group of juveniles while a woman intervened. The mayor snapped a photo of the two men wearing neon utility vests sitting in a truck with the BART logo.

“There was a woman there who was screaming at the kids, ‘Stop, stop, get out of here,’” Butt said. “I was astounded two BART employees would just watch while some brave woman was doing her best to chase these kids off and save this guy.”

BART police said five or six juveniles assaulted the man, kicking and punching him shortly before 11:30 a.m., but Butt estimated that the group numbered about a dozen. The youths escaped into the surrounding area, police said.
BART spokeswoman Alicia Trost said via email Friday that the spot where the attack happened was a plaza outside the station that is “in the jurisdiction of the Richmond Police Department.” But the mayor said he had called 911 and had been greeted by confusion as to whether the incident was under the jurisdiction of BART or Richmond police.

“There were several problems I was concerned with. One is the dispatch issue. To me, it’s crazy for a BART police officer to have to respond to something like this that’s right in the heart of downtown Richmond,” he said.

Butt said he had emailed the BART Board of Directors and Richmond police chief to express his concerns.

He said there was no one at the station agent kiosk, and when he came back through the station about five hours later on his return trip from San Francisco, the kiosk still stood empty.

A station agent was on duty at the time, but may have been dealing with job responsibilities outside the kiosk, Trost said.

“We had a station agent in the station, who likely was involved in one of the many duties required of agents that occur outside the information box such as on platforms and near our ticket vending machines,” Trost said.

The station agent is being interviewed to determine his or her whereabouts, according to BART spokesman Taylor Huckabee.

Trost said the youths were not BART passengers and were loitering in the plaza before the attack. She added that they may have stolen a cigarette from the victim.

The victim suffered non-life-threatening injuries and is expected to make a full recovery, according to Lt. Felix Tan, a spokesman for the Richmond Police Department.

Butt said on his return trip through the station, he noticed another startling detail: The victim’s blood had not been cleaned from the pavement.
“I went up the stairs and was kind of astounded — there was a pool of blood on the sidewalk from where this guy was injured,” Butt said. “Like no one thought it was a good idea to clean it up.”

Trost said, “The blood on the street was Richmond’s jurisdiction, but we still sent a crew to clean it.”