



CITY OF

---

# PORTLAND, OREGON

---

Dan Saltzman, Commissioner  
1221 SW Fourth Ave., Room 230  
Portland, Oregon 97204  
(503) 823-4151  
Fax: (503) 823-3036  
dsaltzman@ci.portland.or.us

---

November 4, 2009

## **COMMISSIONER SALTZMAN'S STATEMENT ON PROPOSED DISCIPLINE FOR OFFICERS INVOLVED IN JAMES CHASSE CASE**

---

The events surrounding the death of James Chasse have had a profound impact on our community as well as the men and women of the Portland Police Bureau. I deeply empathize with the Chasse family's grief and the impact this has had on their lives.

Like many in our community, it is hard for me to imagine how the events of September 17, 2006 turned into the tragedy that resulted in the death of Mr. Chasse. I understand how some might see this case as an overreaction to a seemingly minor infraction, or look at the outcome and conclude that the officers engaged in misconduct. It is not appropriate, however, for me to judge the officers' conduct solely by the outcome of the encounter.

I have fully reviewed the very thorough criminal and administrative investigations in this case. While I am saddened by the death of Mr. Chasse, I have concluded that, with one exception, the officers' conduct did not violate the Bureau's policies and procedures in effect at that time.

I have also concluded, however, that there is more the officers should have done following their encounter with Mr. Chasse. It does not appear that any Bureau member made sure that the medical personnel on the scene received all of the available information before medical personnel cleared Mr. Chasse to be transported to jail in the officers' police car. Mr. Chasse had been in a foot pursuit, taken to the ground, involved in a prolonged struggle, tasered, and at one point appeared to have lost consciousness. Although it is not clear this information would have made a difference in the assessment by medical personnel or in the ultimate death of Mr. Chasse, I believe the officers should have made sure AMR was well aware of all of these facts. I also believe that the officers should have required AMR to transport Mr. Chasse rather than transporting Mr. Chasse to jail in their patrol car.

At the jail, officers observed Mr. Chasse appear to lose consciousness a second time and jail personnel refused to receive him. At this point, I believe the officers should have called for an ambulance at the jail, rather than trying to

take him to the hospital in their patrol car. Again, it is not clear whether this would have avoided the tragic death of Mr. Chasse, but I expect our officers to make every effort to obtain appropriate medical care for people in their custody.

The sworn officers of the Portland Police Bureau strive every day to protect the citizens of Portland, often under trying circumstances. And almost all of the time they do so safely and in accordance with Bureau policy. While I do not believe Officer Humphreys or Sergeant Nice acted maliciously or with any intent to harm Mr. Chasse, I believe that their interactions with medical personnel fell short of the Bureau's legitimate expectations.

I am proposing suspensions without pay for Officer Chris Humphreys and Sergeant Kyle Nice. The officers will have an opportunity to discuss the proposed discipline with Chief Sizer and me before a final decision is made.

Whatever decision is made, it will not reverse the event of September 17, 2006. I hope that all of us—City Council, the Police Bureau and the community—will continue to do the very best we can, with limited resources and a strained mental health system, to prevent another tragedy like this one.

The Police Bureau has made significant efforts to learn from this incident and has made changes in its training, policy and procedures. The Bureau has made changes in its foot pursuit trainings, has required all patrol officers to take extensive Crisis Intervention Training, has revised its medical transport policies, and has made significant changes to its policies and trainings regarding use of force (see attachment). Since we can always do better, I along with Chief Sizer and Commissioner Fritz will be convening an ongoing dialogue with mental health advocates and professionals starting this month. I will ensure that these efforts will continue to make Portland one of the most livable cities in the country and safer for everyone.

-----

*Police Commissioner Saltzman is responsible for protecting the due process rights of the officer and sergeant affected by this decision as well as the pending litigation. For that reason, he must refrain from answering any questions or participating in any interviews at this time.*