

Lawsuit filed in Vacaville shooting

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Posted:

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An Oakland civil rights law firm announced on Wednesday that it has filed a federal civil rights and wrongful death lawsuit on behalf of the family of Kendall Walker, who was fatally shot by Vacaville police last July.

According to the law firm, Haddad & Sherwin, officers from the Vacaville Police Department fired multiple shots killing Kendall Walker, 24, who the lawfirm described as mentally ill and emotionally disturbed, as he got out of his car near the intersection of Ulatis Drive and Nut Tree Road on July 18.

The complaint, filed Wednesday in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California, names the city of Vacaville, as well as retired Police Chief Richard Word and two officers.

The law firm stated that on the day of the incident, officers did not know whether Walker had committed any crime, however, he had previously acted erratically, repeatedly knocking on the door of his longtime friend, whose sister informed their mother, a police dispatcher.

Walker had led police on a low-speed car chase in his Geo Metro which never exceeded any speed limit, according to the law firm.

One of the patrol cars rammed Walker's car using the tactical "PIT" (Pursuit Intervention Technique) maneuver, which caused Walker's car to spin around. The suit claims that Walker emerged from his car un-armed, posing no threat, and that officers fired multiple shots at him without warning. Walker died at the scene.

Vacaville police officials told The Reporter back in July a very different set of circumstances. According to police, earlier in the day of the shooting, police were contacted by two people who said they were concerned about "threats and threatening behavior" being exhibited by Walker. An officer received information that Walker was at a residence in south Vaca-ville and in possession of a folding knife, framing hammer and a crowbar.

Officers spotted a maroon Geo Metro driven by Walker speeding away from the residential neighborhood and tried to pull it over for both traffic violations and to investigate the reports of threatening behavior, police said.

Walker reportedly refused to completely stop the car, yelling at officers before eventually driving away. The officers then engaged in a slow-speed pursuit.

Two PIT maneuvers were necessary to stop Walker, according to police.

Once stopped, Walker grabbed a hammer and a knife, exited his vehicle and started toward officers "in an aggressive and threatening manner, ignoring repeated commands to stop and comply' with orders, police said.

One officer fired several shots at Walker, striking him four times. Officers immediately began life-saving

efforts while Vacaville Fire paramedics were called to the scene, where Walker died.

This is the second lawsuit Haddad & Sherwin has brought against Vacaville alleging use of excessive force against a mentally ill person.

In 1998, the firm sued the department after officers killed Doron Lifton, a schizophrenic man, officials from the law firm stated. A federal jury awarded Rebecca Lifton, Doron's mother, \$1.2 million in wrongful death damages (later reduced to about \$846,000), the firm said.