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Leonard: Chasse death investigation all politics, not justice

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By ERIC ADAMS, KGW.com Staff

PORTLAND, Ore. -- City Commissioner Randy Leonard weighed in on the death of James Chasse at a Wednesday meeting of city council, calling it "inexcusable." On Thursday, he articulated his comment by criticizing the police bureau's three-year inquiry into the mentally ill man's death.



Jamie Marquez, courtesy the Portland Mercury

Medics and police check on a man who later died in police custody.

Leonard said the bureau's investigation had "nothing to do with justice" in Chasse's death and had been more about legal posturing.

Chasse died from internal injuries in 2006 while in police custody. A medical examiner determined he suffered 16 broken ribs, a punctured lung and at least 19 blows to the head from police officers who claimed he was urinating in the street.

"If the Police Bureau caused Mr. Chasse's death and the county denied him medical care, we should pay his family," Leonard said.

Portland Police Bureau and the city are named in a federal civil suit, brought by the Chasse family that claims he was wrongfully killed.

Multnomah County settled with the Chasse family in July for \$925,000.

Last month, near the third anniversary of Chasse's death, Chief Rosie Sizer announced the findings of a Portland Police Bureau internal review had concluded all but one officer was innocent.

Leonard on Thursday said Sizer's review should have taken three months, not three years.

All but one officer was cleared of wrongdoing in the bureau's internal review, released in September. Advocates for the mentally ill have petitioned Sizer to release the review.

Leonard on Thursday indicated he wasn't going to let the issue go away.

Mayor Sam Adams named Commissioner Dan Saltzman as police commissioner last fall after Sizer said she would resign before she'd serve under Leonard. [Background](#)