



## Portland Police Association

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **Grand Jury Clears Officers of Wrongdoing in September 17 Incident**

**Portland, OR --** October 17, 2006. -- Today a Multnomah County Grand Jury cleared Portland Police officers and a Multnomah county deputy sheriff of any criminal wrongdoing in the death of James Chasse. The Grand Jury is comprised of 7 citizens chosen from the community and it is designed to provide an objective, unbiased review of incidents such as this. The Grand Jury took an exhaustive look into the events of September 17 and concluded what the Medical Examiner stated previously, that Mr. Chasse's death was an accident. We thank them for their work, and for their review of this incident.

When officers initially observed Mr. Chasse they could not know he was mentally ill they did however reasonably believe Mr. Chasse was publicly urinating, committing a crime in their presence. When he ran they pursued on foot. Officers attempted to contain Mr. Chasse using a variety of methods including verbal commands, control holds and the Taser. He resisted so fiercely the officers were becoming exhausted and it required three officers to take him into custody. His resistance included biting one officer, requiring hospital treatment. Our officers are trained to use only the degree of force necessary to bring a suspect under control. The Grand Jury's decision makes clear that this is precisely what happened in this case.

Immediately after the encounter the officers called for medical assistance. Every decision made from that point forward was guided by advice given to them by medical professionals. Officers were told, first by paramedics on scene, and later by nurses at jail, that Mr. Chasse was safe to transport. It was the officers who noticed that Mr. Chasse was seriously ill, and officers who unsuccessfully performed CPR.

Each year thousands upon thousands of encounters are resolved without injury to the suspect or officer. Most interactions are positive and routine. It is rare for a suspect to flee or resist and when they do we are obligated to act.

Mr. Chasse's death is a tragedy. While none of us can share in the personal grief of Mr. Chasse's family, the officers involved feel terrible about the conclusion. With every precaution taken to safely contain Mr. Chasse, the final outcome was both unexpected and deeply saddening.

Everyday we find ourselves front line mental health workers. We believe that without meaningful change in our community's safety net for the mentally ill events like this one are inevitable. We understand there will be a community dialogue as a result of this tragedy. We need more than talk; we need decision makers to take action. Specifically, we need the Crisis Triage Center restored, we need funding increased for Project Respond and we need the jail medical staff restored. We believe there is a community wide system failure and we think Mayor Potter is on the right track when he said, "The question the community has to ask is, is this a good way to deal with the mentally ill — to let them wander the streets or using the police as the last resort?"

Maintaining the vigil since 1942