

KATU.com - Breaking News, Sports, Traffic and Weather - Portland, Oregon

[Print this article](#)

Many hope lessons from Chasse death lead to better policy

by Joe English KATU News and KATU.com Staff

Originally printed at <http://www.katu.com/news/local/99517814.html>

PORTLAND, Ore. - While the city's settlement payment to the family of a man who died in police custody may bring an end to a wrongful-death lawsuit, some said Wednesday the case can't be resolved with money.

Many people, including city commissioners, said they hope the lessons learned from the death of James Chasse Jr. will be a lesson on how to keep it from happening again.

In 2006 Portland police tackled and arrested Chasse for urinating in public. He appeared to suffer a seizure at the Multnomah County Jail. He died on the way to the hospital.

The coroner later said he died from blunt force trauma. Multnomah County and American Medical Response already settled with the family for about \$1.5 million. Portland's final check is a little more than three quarters of a million dollars.

For Marsha Myers, who is involved in police reform across the country, the Chasse case should have been settled a long time ago.

"Almost four years is way too long," she said before the City Council Wednesday morning. "It cost us a lot not only financially, but in respect for our peacekeepers."

To the Rev. LeRoy Haines, the real payoff comes from admitting police could have done better and changing the way police are trained.

"It will be used to reform all aspects of the Portland Police Bureau and to bring justice and accountability for the citizens of Portland," he said.

Chasse reportedly suffered from schizophrenia and city commissioners are demanding Portland police be made more aware of mental and emotional issues and more flexible

with their response.

“If we mechanically and robotically respond to each incident by training protocol and don’t allow an incident to be modified by our experience and judgment, then more James Chasse cases will occur,” said City Commissioner Randy Leonard.

Portland’s new police chief, Mike Reese, said he has plans in place to make sure what happened to Chasse doesn’t happen again. He says he’s meeting with a number of city and county agencies to make sure everyone is aware of new and improved procedures as they come up.

Chasse’s family didn’t hold back their criticism of the case. In a [statement](#) they sent out Wednesday, the family said they’re relieved the case has been closed but a civil lawsuit seems to be the only form of justice in officer-involved deaths.

“We hope that what happened to James will help reform this system and to bring other, further policy changes. We know that many incremental changes have happened over the last few years, and we are grateful for those that relate to what happened to James but there is certainly much more that needs to be done.”

[Read the statement from the family of James Chasse](#)