

Statement by the Family of James P. Chasse, Jr.

July 28, 2010

We would like to thank all of those who have supported us and the memory of James over the last four years. Many people in the public have continued to express their concern and to help focus the discussion where it has belonged over the last few years. Thank you. We would also like to thank Tom Steenson, Tom Schneiger and the many good people at Steenson, Schumann, Tewksbury, Creighton & Rose for their tireless efforts in seeking justice for James. This is the only statement we plan on making as a family at this time. We are looking forward, finally, to seeking some personal closure to a gaping, four year-old wound. It has been very difficult to continue dealing with what happened to James as a public matter, and we feel it is very important, finally, to seek some private peace.

It is our understanding that our lawyers may release some factual summaries at a later time, and anyone interested in that may refer to their statements for more detail. We expect their comments to detail many issues, including how some of the issues they discovered in the case tied directly into issues that the City had been repeatedly warned about by the City's consultants (PARC) and others. They obviously know the facts much better than we do, and it only makes sense for them to detail those facts.

Deciding to settle James's case against the City was not an easy decision for us. Our lawyers advised us against the City's final offer. While they were certain that we would prevail and likely be awarded much more in monetary damages at trial, we felt there was little more for us to gain by proceeding through trial. It had become clear that the policy issues we feel are important (and sought to change in the lawsuit) would not be addressed in a trial or through settlement. The previously concealed facts will be made available to the public as part of the settlement. The trial promised to be at least three weeks long. We, James's family, would have had to, once again, endure the retelling of his violent, painful, and needless death, witnessing dozens of gruesome autopsy photos of James, listening to days of testimony about how and why his bones broke, and enduring false and offensive attacks on James and the mentally ill. As the City has said that it would have been difficult for the City to go through the trial, it would have been a cruel ending to the four years of tormented mourning we've experienced over James's horrible death. Then, even if there had been some cathartic effect of getting the facts out through trial, there could be no real assurance that those facts would be accurately or consistently received by the public. Many of the early, erroneous reports about James (e.g., that he was "homeless," "urinating," "violent," etc.) are still often repeated as truth, even though those errors have been repeatedly corrected by widely available facts. Our lawyers' research left little doubt that we would prevail at trial, but the pain of proceeding seemed too great for how little there would be to gain. We feel that we have done all that we can through this system.

We are relieved that the case has settled, but it is a very rough form of justice: the truth is that a civil suit seems to be the only form of justice that our local system will allow when police are involved in a killing. Clearly, the local criminal justice system and the Police Bureau's internal disciplinary groups, both working hand-in-hand daily with the police themselves, are not currently capable of pursuing the public's interests with these issues. If our local emergency workers wish to be seen as heroes, it seems they should be held to a higher standard, not to a secret, self-run, and different standard. There is no avenue for real accountability or real justice in the current system, which can obviously lead to abuses of power by those who have the power of life and death over us. We hope that what happened to James will help to 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.

Finally, those who knew James knew that he was a painfully shy person, more interested in

books and comic books about royalty and superheroes than in talking. When he did talk, he often spoke quietly about noble ideals, such as peace, truth, and justice. While those discussions sometimes seemed other-worldly, we now see that his feelings have helped us to find a greater meaning to his life. James was violently and very publicly removed from our lives on September 17, 2006. The lasting tribute of his life demanded that truth and justice come from what happened to him. He has, in the end, brought desperately needed attention to long-ignored and very serious problems. In the process, this shy and gentle soul, born and so firmly grounded in Portland, has become a hero greater than many to whom we usually look as heroes.

We are hopeful that others will join us in remembering James, and will continue to work toward reforms that will ensure that nothing like what happened to him will happen again. These have been very difficult times for us, but we are hopeful that we will finally be able to come to some peace. Thank you again to the many that have supported us and James. James, may you rest in peace. We love you and we miss you.