



Office of the Washington County Attorney

Kevin Magnuson, County Attorney

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: February 3, 2025

Washington County Attorney's Office concludes that police acted lawfully in shooting incident in North Branch

Stillwater, Minn. – A North Branch police officer lawfully used force when he shot a woman who pointed a gun at him, Washington County Attorney Kevin Magnuson announced. The Washington County Attorney's Office reviewed the matter at the request of the Chisago County Attorney's Office. The sole purpose of the review by the Washington County Attorney's Office was to determine whether any criminal charges would be filed as the result of this incident, not to review or make any conclusions about the overall tactics or conduct of law enforcement.

In a memorandum to the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) dated February 3, 2025, the Washington County Attorney's Office determined that Officer Duane Southworth of the North Branch Police Department was justified in the use of deadly force against 36-year-old Jamie Ann Crabtree. The Washington County Attorney's Office also concluded that responding officers did not violate Minnesota's criminal law regarding rendering aid to gunshot victims. The decision comes after prosecutors reviewed an extensive BCA investigation, which included video from the body and squad car cameras of the officers who were present.

According to the memo, North Branch police officers responded to a 911 call on June 27, 2024, at about 9:19 p.m. The caller reported that his wife, Ms. Crabtree, was intoxicated and had left their home with a handgun in a case. The caller reported that Ms. Crabtree made suicidal comments, including a statement that she would commit "suicide by cop."

At about 9:27 p.m., Southworth and another North Branch Police Officer, Kyle Miller, located Ms. Crabtree on Main Street, about 235 meters from her home. Ms. Crabtree was seated on the ground in a grassy area about 15 feet from the roadway near construction equipment. The area of Main Street where the use of force occurred was under construction at the time.

The two officers arrived at the scene almost simultaneously. Southworth exited his squad vehicle armed with his department-issued .223 semi-automatic rifle, and Miller exited his squad vehicle armed with his department-issued pepperball gun.

Southworth and Miller immediately saw that Ms. Crabtree had taken her gun out of its case and was holding it in her right hand. The officers yelled commands at Ms. Crabtree to put the gun



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down, but Ms. Crabtree did not comply. About 19 seconds after arriving on scene, Officer Miller fired several pepperball rounds at Ms. Crabtree. Pepperball rounds contain a chemical irritant.

Some of the pepperball rounds struck Ms. Crabtree. After being struck by the rounds, body-worn camera video shows that Ms. Crabtree raised her right arm with an object, which officers believed to be the gun, still in her right hand. Ms. Crabtree pointed the gun at Officer Southworth. Southworth then fired 23 rounds at Ms. Crabtree. Ms. Crabtree was struck by some of the rounds, which caused her to drop her gun and fall backwards from her seated position. Shortly after falling backwards, Ms. Crabtree rolled back toward her gun, which was near her, with her arm outstretched. Officer Southworth then fired one additional round.

About 15 seconds after Officer Southworth fired the last round, a North Branch police sergeant who had arrived on scene yelled commands at Ms. Crabtree to roll away from the gun, which included, "We want to help you, but we need you to roll away from the gun." Officers took cover behind their squad vehicles while shouting to Ms. Crabtree that they wanted to help her, but she needed to roll away from the gun.

Officers Southworth and Miller both reported to the BCA that they were aware of an incident that occurred in Minneapolis 28 days before this incident. In the Minneapolis incident, a police officer was killed by a suspect who pretended to be injured and then rolled over and shot the officer as the officer approached to render aid. Officer Southwick reported that this incident played a role in his decision not to immediately approach Ms. Crabtree to render aid after Officer Southworth shot her.

A Chisago County sheriff's deputy arrived at the scene and coordinated a plan to approach Ms. Crabtree by using his vehicle as a moving shield. Officers then approached Ms. Crabtree pursuant to that plan, and officers began rendering aid to Ms. Crabtree about 15 minutes after she was shot. Officers recovered numerous personal articles around Ms. Crabtree, including bottles of alcohol, a backpack, and a gun case containing fully loaded magazines. Officers also located a 9mm Glock semi-automatic handgun, which was unloaded, near Ms. Crabtree's right calf/ankle area.

Ms. Crabtree was pronounced dead at the scene. An autopsy revealed that Ms. Crabtree died as the result of her gunshot wounds. Toxicology tests revealed the presence of alcohol and THC in Ms. Crabtree's system.



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“Police officers must make difficult, split-second decisions when their lives, or the lives of others, are in danger,” Magnuson said. “Many of those decisions must be made when dealing with people who are undergoing a mental health crisis and who are sometimes suicidal. When officers make the decision to use lethal force to defend themselves or others, the results can be tragic, as they were in this case.”

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