

In-Custody Death Investigation

Adam Sagmeister

Valley Independent Investigative Team

Kent Police Department, #2020-8086



King County Prosecuting Attorney

Public Integrity Team

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DECLINE MEMORANDUM

In-Custody Death of **Adam Sagmeister**

WARNING – This memorandum contains images and descriptions of violence that may be offensive and disturbing to some readers. The images and descriptions are included to provide the reader with the most accurate information regarding the topic of this memorandum.

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF MEMORANDUM

The King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office (KCPAO) shall inform the King County Executive whenever the investigation into a death involving a member of any law enforcement agency in King County is complete and also advise whether an inquest should be initiated.¹ There shall be an inquest into the manner, facts, and circumstances of any death of an individual where an action, decision, or possible failure to offer the appropriate care by a member of any law enforcement agency might have contributed to an individual's death unless the County Executive determines, based on a review of the investigation, that the role of law enforcement was de minimis and did not contribute in any discernable way to a person's death.²

The Special Operations Unit Public Integrity Team (the Team) has determined that the investigation into this matter is complete. The determination whether to file charges is based entirely on the materials provided to the KCPAO, relevant criminal laws, rules of evidence governing criminal proceedings, the applicable burden of proof, and the KCPAO's Filing and Disposition Standards. This determination is not intended to address matters outside the scope of this memorandum including, but not limited to, administrative action by the involved agency or any other civil action. The Team expresses no opinion regarding the propriety or likely outcome of any such actions.

II. INVESTIGATION SUMMARY

The subject, Adam Sagmeister, was a 29-year-old male. He was arrested on June 21, 2020, by Auburn Police for Driving without a License in the Third Degree and criminal charges were filed against him in District Court.

Upon booking, Sagmeister was identified as likely to suffer from an unidentified substance abuse withdrawal and was therefore placed into a medical protocol cell for a period of approximately 24 hours. After 24 hours passed, Sagmeister requested to be put into general population and this request was granted. According to Officer 1, Score Jail facility has a "comfort package" which they regularly provide to inmates who may be suffering from substance abuse withdrawal while in custody. These items are designed to assist in the aid and comfort of the inmate as they withdraw from whatever substance abuse issue they have. Sagmeister refused these comfort items. Upon placement in general population, Sagmeister was assigned to a two-person cell, S2-02, where he resided until the time of his death on June 24, 2020.

¹ Executive Order PHL 7-1-5 EO.

² Id.

Video surveillance from inside cell S2-02 on June 24, 2020, shows the subject passing away in his sleep. Footage shows him get out of bed to urinate at 0230, return to his bed and fall asleep. At 0421 he tosses and turns in his bed for a few minutes, then draws his legs and hands to his chest. His body then relaxes and then he flattens out on his back and his left arm falls off the left side of the bed, hanging limply.

During a routine security check near 0600, Corrections Officer 1 noticed the subject in the above position and became concerned. Corrections Officer 1 entered the cell and found the subject unresponsive, having no pulse. Multiple officers came to the subject's assistance and Corrections Officer 1 and Corrections Officer 2 gave the subject CPR, but CPR and lifesaving measures proved unsuccessful. SeaTac Fire Dept. arrived on scene and pronounced the subject deceased. Inmate 1 later refused to speak with investigators about the incident, but footage shows him asleep when the subject expired.

In a subsequent interview with Civilian 1, a family friend, Civilian 1 stated that she believed Adam had been on a "bender" for the past three days prior to getting arrested, drinking alcohol heavily and abusing Heroin and was on methadone.

According to the Medical Examiner, the cause of death of this 29-year-old man found dead in his jail cell is combined methamphetamine, methadone, and chlordiazepoxide intoxication. The manner of death is classified as an accident. However, the Medical Examiner noted that methamphetamine, not its metabolite, amphetamine, was detected in the subject's post-mortem toxicology test. The medical examiner stated that this likely indicates that the subject ingested methamphetamine after being booked into the jail.

III. LEGAL ANALYSIS

The King County Medical Examiner ruled Mr. Sagmeister's death to be an accident. There is no evidence to call this conclusion into question. As a result, no criminal charges are appropriate.

IV. INQUEST RECOMMENDATION

After a careful review of these materials, we are satisfied that the investigation is now complete. Pursuant to Executive Order PHL-7-1-5-EO, we recommend an inquest be initiated because we have not identified any factors or circumstances under §6.1, or any other reasons, that indicate that an inquest is not warranted.