In-Custody Death Review
Billy Sterling

Seattle Police Department
Force Investigation Team, #2021FIT-0013



King County Prosecuting Attorney
Public Integrity Team

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DECLINE MEMORANDUM

In-Custody Death of Billy Sterling

I. Factual Summary:

The subject, Billy V. Sterling, was a 66 year old male. He was arrested on June 17, 2021, and charged in King County Superior Court with two counts of promoting the commercial sex abuse of a minor. Mr. Sterling was held in lieu of $200,000 bail and housed at the King County Jail awaiting trial. His physical health deteriorated while in jail. He was diagnosed with metastatic prostate cancer, emphysema, congestive heart failure and hepatitis C and entered the infirmary on September 6, 2021, to receive end of life care.

On October 13, 2021, Judge 1denied the subject's second bail motion for release because he violated the court's pre-trial order to cease having contact with minors.

On November 3, 2021, at approximately 10:30 PM Jail Health Services Nurse 1 and Corrections Officer 1 performed a routine and timely check of C-Dorm of the infirmary where the subject was housed. According to the inmate infirmary roster, there were no other inmates house in C-Dorm. The nursing staff last reported seeing the subject alive at 9:06 PM. Corrections Officer 1 opened C-dorm for Nurse 1. Nurse 1 entered and observed the subject laying on his bed, not moving and with no pulse.

No lifesaving measured were taken due to the subject's "do not resuscitate request" on file with the jail. He was pronounced dead at 10:33 PM. The jail informed SPD of the death. SPD officers were dispatch to the jail and arrived on scene to secure C-dorm for the medical examiner and SPD FIT. Per SPD Officer 1's statement, "There were no signs of suspicious circumstances." SPD FIT Officer 2 interviewed Corrections Officer 2, who was located around the corner from C-Dorm keeping an eye on a different inmate on suicide watch. Corrections Officer 2 stated nothing

else abnormal occurred around that time the subject was discovered deceased by Jail Health Services staff. The medical examiner later ruled the death to be natural. The subject's cause of death is probable pulmonary emphysema.

There was no video of the subject's death to review. SPD FIT Officer 2 and Officer 3 identified four cameras on the infirmary and requested the video footage from jail staff. Per Officer 4 at DAJD, there were budget constraints at the time the video system was installed, so footage was not recorded and stored on the DAJD server.

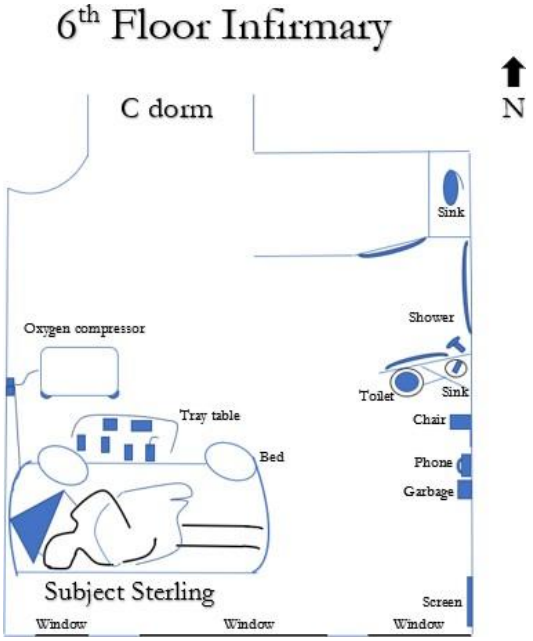


Figure 1: Schematic of C-Dorm where Mr. Sterling passed away.

II. Legal Analysis:

The King County Medical Examiner ruled Mr. Sterling's death to be of natural causes most likely from pulmonary emphysema. There is no evidence to call that conclusion into question. As a result, no criminal charges are appropriate.

III. Recommendation for Inquest:

Because the role of law enforcement was *de minimis* and did not contribute in any discernable way to Mr. Sterling's death an inquest is not recommended. Executive Order PHL 7-1-5 EO, §6.1.