

DA must complete investigation before state AG review of Vallejo shooting

By Jessica A. York
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A unanimously backed Vallejo City Council proposal Tuesday night calling for an independent state review of a controversial Vallejo officer-involved shooting may hinge on the Solano County district attorney.

A request for Attorney General Kamala Harris' office to scrutinize a local investigation ultimately would have to come from the district attorney's office once its own independent investigation has ended, officials from those two offices said Tuesday.

District Attorney Don du Bain and an Attorney General's Office spokeswoman both told the Times-Herald before Tuesday night's council meeting that it is standard for such reviews to be initiated at the district attorney's request.

Du Bain said he has no objection to such a review of his office's investigation, stressing that the state's common procedure is simply that — a review, rather than a full-blown top-to-bottom investigation of officer-involved

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incidents. Du Bain said it was "hard for me to commit" on whether he will make the request, until his office has completed its investigation.

"I've agreed to expedite this investigation at the mayor's request," du Bain said, when asked how long his investigation may take.

Du Bain added that completion of his investigation hinges on completion of the Vallejo Police Department's internal affairs investigation of the shooting.

The council's unanimous vote at a standing room-only City Hall meeting came after about an hour of public comment, much centered specifically around the Sept. 2 fatal shooting of Mario Romero, 23.

Council members offered their condolences to Romero's family and friends in the first scheduled council discussion of the matter, and then threw their support behind the external review.

In addition to inviting the state attorney general's review, the council also backed Davis' proposals to investigate buying and supplying all police officers with body cameras, all patrol cars with computer system-connected cameras and a department firearms / use of force training simulator system.

The department already has 40 body cameras — not enough for the whole force, and officers have the option to use them. The cameras can also be mounted on patrol car dashboards, but do not turn on automatically.

Councilwoman Marti Brown added that it will take more than just technology and crisis reaction, however, to fix what ails Vallejo. Councilwoman Stephanie Gomes said she would like the attorney general to expand any review to include the federal Department of Justice.

"Managing crisis every time something comes up is not a solution for the city of Vallejo," Brown said, as some yelled from the audience at her. "Because, as you of all people have pointed out, we have had seven officer-involved shootings this year alone, and that is not normal, nor should it ever be normal nor should it ever be acceptable." (There actually have been eight officer-involved shootings, including the most recent one on Sept. 13, in Pleasant Hill at the end of a high-speed pursuit. No one was injured.)

Within 30 days, the city manager is due to bring the council a memo discussing the potential reestablishment of the Human Relations Commission, a forum that would allow the public to air concerns about police and other city employees, and a memo on how the police department will address its communication issues.

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