St. Petersburg Police Department
News Release

For Immediate Release

Sep 24, 2013

Update 3 re. Officer Involved Shooting

Deceased Suspect: Kenneth Robert Sprankle, W/M, DOB 01/27/1986, Transient

Involved Officer: Damien Schmidt, 55, sworn officer since May 1983

Investigators have released the name of the decease armed suspect and officer involved in last night’s shooting at Central Avenue and 4th Street. Next of kin have been notified.

Sprankle does have a history of mental health issues and has been taken into custody under the Baker Act by the St. Petersburg Police on seven different occasions since March 2013. The most recent incidents took place on September 14th and 16th of this year.

Acquaintances of Sprankle’s also informed investigators that he had been seen smoking spice in Williams Park within the hour prior to the shooting.

Further investigation last night revealed that the ax found in the suspect’s possession was the property of the St. Petersburg Fire Department and likely stolen while the firefighters were on the scene of fire alarm call at the Princess Martha Apartments at 411 1st Avenue North at around 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, September 21st. The SPFD is looking into the circumstances surrounding the theft of the ax.

As noted last night, Officer Schmidt is on administrative leave pending the outcome of the criminal and internal investigations.

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Previous Release of Mon Sep 23, 2013 22:52:17

2nd Update re. Officer Involved Shooting

At 6:48 p.m. tonight we received a report of a man holding an ax walking east bound on Central Avenue from the area of 4th Street. The caller stated that the man was acting very agitated and was yelling at a group of four to five individuals.

Two officers arrived in the immediate area, with one officer coming south on 4th Street and stopping his cruiser just north of Central Avenue.

As that officer came to a stop, he observed a small group of 4 to 6 subjects running around the NE corner of Central Avenue, heading north on the east side of 4th Street near the Municipal Services Building. The group appeared to be in fear
and seemed to be fleeing from someone as they ran past the officer’s position.

A moment later the officer observed a man rounding the same corner holding a large ax which he had raised in a threatening manner. The man was yelling unintelligibly statements and was advancing at a fast pace directly towards the officer who drew his firearm and gave multiple warnings for the man to stop and drop the ax.

The man continued to advance until, at a distance of approximately seven feet, the officer fired multiple times wounding the man in the upper body and causing him to fall to the sidewalk.

The 2nd officer who had responded was in the area was south of the scene near Central Avenue, but not in the immediate vicinity of the shooting.

The suspect was pronounced dead at the scene by paramedics. Neither the officer nor any of the witnesses involved suffered any injuries.

Investigators have tentatively identified suspect as a 27 year old white male transient. We will release his identity once his next of kin have been notified.

Detectives believe that suspect does have a documented history of mental health issues in the past and may also have issues with substance abuse.

Acquaintances report that the suspect was seen with the ax earlier in the day, acting aggressive in and around Williams Park, but no one apparently called the police at that time. Detectives are still investigating how the suspect became in possession of the ax.

The identity of the officer involved in the shooting will be release tomorrow morning.

The officer has been put on administrative leave while investigators from the Department’s Investigative Services Bureau, Internal Affairs Unit and the Pinellas/Pasco State Attorney’s Office conduct their inquiry.

Information released by Mike Puetz, 727-420-6448, michael.puetz@stpete.org

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Previous release of Mon Sep 23, 2013 21:33:35

Update re. Officer Involved Shooting

Attached is a photo of the suspect’s ax lying on the sidewalk at the scene. I will be sending out additional details regarding the circumstance surrounding the shooting a little later in the evening.
Information released by Mike Puetz, 727-420-6448, michael.puetz@stpete.org

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Previous release of Mon Sep 23, 2013 19:43:35

Officer Involved Shooting

Investigators are currently on the scene of an officer involved shooting at 4th Street North, between Central and First Avenues North.

Details are still preliminary, but at about 6:45 p.m., officers responded to a call of an armed man threatening people with an ax in the area of Central Avenue and 4th Street.

Two officers arrived on the scene and as they approached the man he charged at one officer while still holding the ax. In response the officer discharged his weapon striking the man who fell to the pavement.

Paramedics responded and the suspect was pronounced dead on the scene.

Mike Puetz is responding to the scene and will meet the media near the Post Office at 1st Avenue North and 4th Street. He should arrive at about 8:15 p.m.

Information released by Mike Puetz, 727-420-6448, michael.puetz@stpete.org