

## **Pawtucket police release details in shooting - Valley Breeze, The: Pawtucket Edition (RI) - September 12, 2018**

September 12, 2018 | Valley Breeze, The: Pawtucket Edition (RI) | ETHAN SHOREY

PAWTUCKET – Police this week offered more details in the case of a local man, **DaShawn Cole**, who was killed by police in a shooting early last Friday morning, including the name of the police officer who shot him.

Last Friday, Sept. 7, around 6:30 a.m., officers responded to a 911 call for a man with a gun in the area of Cottage Street. The first responding officer, Ana Vertentes, found a man who matched the description on Newport Avenue, said police in a news release late Monday afternoon. When she attempted to make contact with Cole, who had a gun, “he immediately attacked her,” said police in the release.

“A violent struggle ensued between Officer Vertentes and Cole, resulting in her discharging her firearm,” states the release. “During the struggle, backup Officers William Briggs and Dianne Rittman-McLaughlin responded. While still armed with the firearm, Cole confronts the two officers, resulting in Officers Rittman-McLaughlin and Briggs discharging their firearms.”

Several officers on scene attempted life-saving measures including CPR on Cole until rescue personnel arrived, according to police. Cole was later pronounced dead at Rhode Island Hospital. The investigation is ongoing, and the Pawtucket Police Department is working with the Rhode Island State Police and the Rhode Island Attorney General’s Office throughout the investigation.

Vertentes was hired in July of 2016 and Rittman-McLaughlin and Briggs were hired in March of 2010.

Earlier on Monday, the Rhode Island ACLU put out a statement questioning why more details hadn’t been disclosed to that point, also pointing out that half of the state’s police-involved shootings since 2006 have occurred in Pawtucket.

Public Safety Director Jim Vartanian responded to the ACLU’s assertions with a statement Monday afternoon saying officials appreciate the ACLU’s role in preserving rights, adding that more information would be forthcoming.

“Please rest assured that more information regarding the shooting will be forthcoming, and that it will be as transparent as possible as the investigation continues and ultimately comes to conclusion,” he said.

In his release Monday, ACLU Executive Director Steven Brown said that “very basic information” about the incident remained undisclosed.

Brown contrasted “the belated sharing of information by police during officer-involved shootings

and the much more free-flowing disclosure of information when serious civilian-upon-civilian crimes occur,” saying it is “striking and totally unacceptable. In fact, similar secrecy disconcertingly shrouded the last fatal police shooting in Pawtucket in 2016.”

According to published accounts, there have been 14 incidents of deadly police shootings in Rhode Island since 2006. Of those 14 deaths, seven of them, have been at the hands of Pawtucket police, “a truly alarming figure,” said Brown.

Of the city’s 10 officer-involved shootings since 2003, seven have been fatal. All previous ones were ruled justified.

“While this figure is disturbing, we want to emphasize that we make no judgment on the actions police took on Friday,” said Brown. “Indeed, we don’t have enough information for that. However, it cannot be denied that Pawtucket police are far more likely to use deadly force than other police departments.”

The ACLU recognizes the dangers police face daily, and that every police shooting must be evaluated on its own merits and in recognition of the split-second decisions that officers must often make, added Brown, but Pawtucket’s numbers warrant both internal and external investigations, as well as a review of the police department’s training and practices to determine “the causes behind this disconcerting track record.”

“Just as importantly, we call on all police departments to be more forthcoming with basic information about police shootings when they occur, rather than shrouding them in secrecy for lengthy periods of time,” he said.

In an afternoon press conference last Friday, police announced that the person who died in an officer-involved shooting that morning, Cole, 28, was carrying a firearm and allegedly committed a felony assault of an officer prior to the shooting.

The shooting took place around 6:30 a.m. in the area of Newport Avenue and Benefit Street. No officers were hurt, according to Chief of Police Tina Goncalves. The three patrol officers who confronted Cole and were involved in the incident were placed on administrative leave, she said.

The chief said more than a dozen times during a five-minute press conference that she wouldn’t be commenting further and the matter was still under investigation.