

Steinberg shuts down council session after - Sacramento Bee, The (CA) - September 15, 2018 - page 1B

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Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg abruptly adjourned an emotionally charged City Council meeting Thursday night a little more than an hour into the session after a series of speakers peppered their comments with obscenities directed at the dais.

The outbursts came as anger and frustration continue to mount over the death of another African-American man at the hands of Sacramento police.

Darell Richards, a mentally ill 19-year-old African-American man, was shot dead just after midnight Sept. 6, by officers in a Curtis Park backyard. Richards was carrying a pellet gun. Officers found Richards crouched under a stairwell a few blocks from where he was first spotted on Broadway near 16th Street. Officers opened fire when Richards pointed the pistol at them, Sacramento police officials said.

"The least you can do is fire those officers. This shouldn't be happening," Stephanie Periera, who would be the meeting's final speaker, said from the podium. "Have you heard his mother's wails? There's no excuse for your (expletive). F--- you," Periera said.

By then, Steinberg had had enough.

"You must leave the chamber. There's got to be decorum here. You can't use profanity directed at any of us," Steinberg said before calling for the next speaker as audience members shouted "Stop killing us!" from their seats.

After a few more minutes, Steinberg ended the session.

"The business of the council, being done, is adjourned," he said.

Richards' death last week was months after the death of Brandon Smith while in custody at Sacramento County Main Jail. The community was roiled in March by the high-profile officer-involved shooting of Stephon Clark in a Meadowview neighborhood that sent protesters marching through Sacramento streets, to the county District Attorney's Office and to Sacramento City Hall, where demonstrators packed meetings in the wake of Clark's death.

The tense atmosphere in the days and weeks after Clark's shooting was punctuated by demonstrations outside chambers and by Clark's brother Stevante Clark sprinting to the council dais for a face-to-face confrontation with Steinberg.

Months later in July, council members mulled a ban on "abusive or threatening" protesters at council meetings that would bar people ejected from two or more meetings in a six-month period

from council sessions for 30 days and impose a 90-day ban on those ejected from three or more meetings during that same six-month span.

City officials on Friday said the council has no current plan to bring back those proposed changes to the rules and procedures for a vote.

A calmer Stevante Clark spoke Thursday, calling again for police accountability and for the resource center, library and recreation centers he wants erected in his brother's name.

"The city feels failed again," Stevante Clark said. "There's a lot of accountability that needs to be held on the police department for the things that are happening in the city of Sacramento. We all should come together and find solutions, because it's messed up what's going on."

One after another, speakers railed against Sacramento police and leveled criticism against council members and Steinberg, who they suggested was more concerned with council decorum than officer-involved deaths of black and brown people.

"Stop killing black people. It's really that simple. The community is coming in here telling you that black lives matter and asking you to stop killing them - and yet, you're killing them," speaker James J. Jackson Jr., said addressing Steinberg. "Get your (expletive) together. If you care more about decorum than you care about people saying, 'Don't kill black people,' then you're a terrible person."

The aborted meeting also marked two years to the day after Sacramento Black Lives Matter leader Tanya Faison and others stood before the council to demand action after the deaths of Dazion Flenaugh and Joseph Mann after being confronted by police.

"On this exact day, we filled up this council chambers. We were fighting for Dazion and for Joseph Mann. We were fighting for a (police) commission that had more power. We didn't get any of that," Faison told council members. "I don't know how you all expect to be respected in this space when you're not doing anything."

The mayor also ejected several people who launched profanities from the podium and invoked council decorum rules that state that those attending council meetings refrain from inappropriate behavior and derogatory comments.

Sacramento officers slowly converged on another speaker who was repeatedly warned that she had exceeded her two-minute speaking limit but refused to leave the podium. Audience members briefly surrounded the speaker and shielded her from officers before she left the chambers.