



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Press Release

Norfolk DA finds Stoughton Officer Fired in Self-Defense

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Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey has completed a 6-week review of the February 5, 2015, non-fatal shooting of Cannon Dawson in the town of Stoughton. That review and investigation revealed that the Stoughton Officer acted reasonably and lawfully in discharging his weapon.

The available evidence, including bystander video and witness interviews, reveals the following:

On the afternoon of January 5, 2015, Cannon Dawson was involved in a two-car motor vehicle collision at Brook and Central Streets in Stoughton. Dawson's Honda Accord struck the rear of a Mercedes-Benz. The operator of the Mercedes contacted the Stoughton Police Department to report the collision when Dawson refused to provide any insurance or other information except his name.

When Stoughton Police arrived on scene, the first officer determined it was appropriate to prepare an accident report on the collision. Dawson refused to provide his license and registration to police. After being warned that failure to do so could result in arrest, Dawson continued to refuse. The officer attempted to place Dawson under arrest, but the defendant physically resisted.

The officer initially took his chemical spray in hand and warned Dawson that he would use it. Because of their positioning, the officer recognized that he could not spray the subject without the spray coming into contact with his own face. Dawson continued to struggle with the officer, who then un-holstered his department-issued Taser and provided a verbal warning. As a second officer arrived and joined the physical struggle, Dawson spun away and punched the first officer in the face.

The officer then fired the Taser. Dawson spun around and fled across the road, barely avoiding collision with a passing vehicle. The officer pursued Dawson and discharged the Taser a second time, missing him. The foot pursuit continued toward a dead end. Dawson reached into his pocket and retrieved an object. He turned toward the officer but fell to the ground. He regained his feet, flipped open a knife held in his right hand, and stepped toward the officer. It was at this time that the officer drew his weapon and fired a single round. Dawson threw the knife as he fell. It was retrieved in a nearby snowbank.

Lifesaving medical treatment was immediately and successfully rendered.

In addition to being justified as a matter of law discharging his weapon in the face of immediate deadly threat, the officer acted properly throughout the incident employing an appropriate escalating use of force from initial verbal commands to physical contact to non-lethal means before eventually being confronted by an imminent deadly threat.

This inquiry is closed with no expectation of further activity.