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NEWS

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Janesville, Wis. - Rock County District Attorney David J. O’Leary announced today that the District Attorney has received and reviewed the investigative reports prepared by the State of Wisconsin, Department of Justice, Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), including investigative reports and interviews with police and citizen witnesses, body camera and squad videos from the Beloit Police Department, concerning the police officer involved shooting which occurred on April 28, 2024, in the City of Beloit.

Officers from the Beloit Police Department (BPD) were dispatched to a check welfare call around 7:19 a.m., at a residence in the 1700 block of Ashland Avenue. The subject was later identified as Michael Ward (age 33) and officers spoke with the reporting person who wanted Ward removed from the house where they lived as Ward had kicked a minor resident and adult resident out of the house and threatened to blow it up. The reporting person and family members had also told officers that Ward had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, has been treated by a doctor and has taken medications in the past and has threatened suicide in the past. Officers attempted contact with Ward, however, Ward refused any contact with officers. Officers spoke to Ward’s father who was on scene and had spoken to Ward, and he stated that Ward said he was sorry and had not made any threats to harm himself or others. Officers decided that since the reporting party was out of the home, Ward was unwilling to communicate with officers, Ward was not committing any crimes and was not making any threats to harm himself or others at the time, BPD would not force a confrontation with Ward and would leave the area.

On Sunday, April 28, 2024, around 9:50 a.m., BPD officers were called back to the same residence and dispatch advised that Ward had threatened to kill the reporting party with a hunting knife and held a knife to his throat threatening to commit suicide. Officer Anderson reported that Ward had threatened “suicide by cop” in the past. Officers had

contact with the reporting person in a vehicle parked in front of the residence, and she was upset because Ward was destroying her property in the residence. The reporting person wanted Ward removed from the residence and officers were gathering information from her when Ward exited the residence carrying swords (approximately 2-3 feet in length), one in each hand. Ward walked from the side of the residence into the middle of Ashland Avenue and began pacing back and forth in front of the officers and the reporting person's vehicle. Officers continuously yelled at Ward telling him to drop the weapons but Ward refused. Ward was swinging the swords around and repeatedly challenging the officers to shoot him. The officers continued to back up to keep a safe distance from Ward when the reporting person exited her vehicle and began yelling at Ward to "stop" and to put the swords down. The reporting person was now the closest person to Ward. The reporting person said she knew what was going to happen and wanted to make a last attempt to save Ward's life. Officers yelled at the reporting person to get into her car for her own safety but she failed to do so. Ward continued yelling at the officers including shouting "go ahead and shoot me, I have nothing to live for." Officers moved closer to Ward to give cover to the reporting person. Ward began walking toward the reporting person, placing her in imminent danger of great bodily harm or death. Officer Nicholas Rodenbeck fired six (6) shots from his handgun at Ward, striking him in the chest and causing him to drop the swords and fall to the ground. Officers immediately approached Ward and secured the weapons and provided emergency medical aid until paramedics arrived. Ward was transported to Beloit Memorial Hospital where he was pronounced deceased from his injuries at approximately 10:37 a.m. After securing the scene, Officers conducted a protective sweep of the residence and observed damage throughout the residence, including broken cabinets, mirrors, windows, televisions and pictures all broken and covering the floor.

Officer Rodenbeck joined the Army Reserves in 2018, where he has been trained and still serves as a combat medic and as a combat life saver instructor. Officer Rodenbeck was hired as a full-time police officer by BPD in 2021 and was one of the officers who assisted in providing emergency care to Ward until paramedics arrived.

After reviewing the reports, the body camera and squad videos and photographs of the incident and the witness statements, the District Attorney has concluded that Officer Rodenbeck acted lawfully and in accordance with his duty as a sworn law enforcement officer. Officer Rodenbeck acted in order to protect the life of the reporting person, who was in imminent danger from Ward's life-threatening behavior. It is the conclusion of the Rock County District Attorney that Ward was shot and died as a direct result of his own actions. The Rock County District Attorney further concludes that the use of force by Officer Rodenbeck was both legal and appropriate under the facts as presented by the

independent investigation conducted by DCI and there is no basis for prosecution based upon the officer's actions.

Wisconsin Statute §175.47 requires that, in the event of the death of an individual as the result of an action or inaction by a law enforcement officer, the ensuing investigation must be conducted by an investigative team from an independent agency; DCI therefore conducted the investigation into this matter. The lead investigator in this matter was Special Agent Alexander Agnew. DCI reviewed all reports, body camera, squad camera and witness interviews, interviewed law enforcement and civilian witnesses, reviewed the Rock County Medical Examiner's findings, and collected and examined all necessary evidence.

When the DCI serves as the independent investigative agency, it provides a complete report to the District Attorney for review. The District Attorney has determined that there is no basis for prosecution of the law enforcement officer, therefore, access to the reports as required by §175.47(5)(b) will be posted on DOJ's website:

<https://www.doj.state.wi.us/dci/officer-involved-critical-incident>

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