



STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Josh Kaul
Attorney General

17 W. Main Street
P.O. Box 7857
Madison, WI 53707-7857
www.doj.state.wi.us

Paul M. Ferguson
Assistant Attorney General
fergusonpm@doj.state.wi.us
608/266-1221
TTY 1-800-947-3529
FAX 608/267-2779

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To Whom This May Concern:

In response to public records requests received by the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ), a copy of DOJ's Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) investigative case file for DCI's investigation into the April 8, 2020 officer-involved death of Damian M. Quinonez, has been prepared for release. The Kenosha County District Attorney determined there is no basis to prosecute any of the law enforcement officers involved, and DCI is releasing its case file pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 175.47(5)(b).

The DCI case in question is **20-2618 – Kenosha OID**. That investigative case file has been reviewed in preparation for public release, and a copy of the case file reports has been made available online on the Wisconsin Department of Justice's website at www.doj.state.wi.us/dci/officer-involved-critical-incident. Access to copies of related photographs, audio recordings, and video recordings may be obtained by contacting the DOJ Communications Office at dojcommunications@doj.state.wi.us.

Certain information was redacted from the records, either because specifically required by law or pursuant to the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) public records balancing test. These redactions are described below. In addition, these records were prepared for release mindful that the purpose of the Wisconsin public records law is to shed light on the workings of government and the official acts of public officers and employees. *Building and Constr. Trades Council v. Waunakee Comm. Sch. Dist.*, 221 Wis. 2d 575, 582, 585 N.W.2d 726 (Ct. App. 1998).

Well-established public policy recognizes the privacy rights of a deceased person's surviving loved ones. *Cf. National Archives and Records Admin. v. Favish*, 541 U.S. 157, 168, 171-72 (2004). In preparing these records for release, the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) balancing test was applied, and the public interest in treating surviving loved ones of the deceased with respect for their privacy and dignity outweighed any public interest in disclosure of the following records:

- Graphic images in photographs and video of Mr. Quinonez at the scene and during his subsequent autopsy, as well as graphic descriptions of Mr. Quinonez's medical condition.

In performing the balancing test, the public interest in protecting the privacy of this family, and in facilitating cooperation with law enforcement in sensitive investigations, also outweighs any public interest in disclosure of the described records. *Cf. Linzmeyer v. Forcey*, 2002 WI 84, ¶ 38, 254 Wis. 2d 306, 646 N.W.2d 811.

Wisconsin Const. art. I, § 9m requires that crime victims be treated with “fairness, dignity and respect for their privacy.” Related Wisconsin statutes recognize that this state constitutional right must be vigorously honored by law enforcement agencies and that crime victims include both persons against whom crimes have been committed and the family members of those persons. Wis. Stat. §§ 950.01 and 950.02(4)(a). The Wisconsin Supreme Court, speaking about both Wis. Const. art. I, § 9m, and related victim rights statutes, has instructed that “justice requires that all who are engaged in the prosecution of crimes make every effort to minimize further suffering by crime victims.” *Schilling v. Crime Victim Rights Bd.*, 2005 WI 17, ¶ 26, 278 Wis. 2d 216, 692 N.W.2d 623. Even in those situations in which a criminal prosecution does not occur, it is the policy of our office to consider the privacy rights of those who could be considered victims entitled to these protections when applying the balancing test regarding the release of investigative records. Pursuant to the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) balancing test, these public policies requiring that crime victims be treated with respect for their privacy and dignity outweigh any public interest in disclosure of the names or other personally identifying information of these individuals where present within DCI case file records. The public interest favoring protection of the victims from unnecessary public attention, possible harassment, and unnecessary emotional upset outweighs any public interest in the disclosure of this information.

Pursuant to the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) balancing test, the public interest in protecting the ability of law enforcement to gather information when conducting sensitive investigations and in protecting the privacy of citizens involved in those investigations outweighs any public interest in disclosure of information that could identify witnesses and other individuals referenced by witnesses. *Cf. Wis. Stat. § 19.31; Linzmeyer*, 254 Wis. 2d 306, ¶¶ 30, 32, 39, 41. Due to the sensitive and sometimes controversial nature of officer-involved death incidents, public disclosure of the full names and other identifying information for individuals interviewed or mentioned during interviews could expose these individuals to unwanted public scrutiny, criticism, or pressure from outside sources, which could have a chilling effect on future witnesses' willingness to come forward and cooperate with law enforcement in investigations of similar incidents. Accordingly, the following information was redacted from the records prepared for release:

- The name of a passenger in Mr. Quinonez's vehicle.
- Names of family members, adult witnesses, and others mentioned by individuals interviewed. (Initials for the names of these individuals were not redacted.) The last name of family members was left unredacted if it was the same as the deceased

individual's last name. The names of law enforcement officers and other public employees mentioned in the records were not redacted.

- Other information that would identify the above individuals including dates of birth; home addresses; home and personal cellular telephone numbers; descriptions, license plate numbers, and VIN numbers of vehicles, including in images; signatures; and driver's license numbers.
- The names and ages of involved juveniles and juvenile family members were redacted in full.

The names of juveniles and their ages, which could identify the juveniles, were also redacted pursuant to the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) balancing test. Revealing the names and ages of the juveniles is not essential to understanding the requested records. In performing the balancing test, DOJ determined that the public interest in avoiding unnecessary intrusion into the personal lives of persons collaterally mentioned in the records, especially minor children and juveniles, outweighs any public interest in information about the conduct of governmental affairs. Additionally, well-established public policy recognizing the confidentiality and privacy of children and juveniles is expressed in Wis. Stat. §§ 48.396 and 938.396. The same underlying public policy of protecting the confidentiality and privacy of children and juveniles outweighs any public interest in disclosure of the redacted information. *See* Wis. Stat. § 48.396 (“Law enforcement officers’ records of children . . . shall not be open to inspection or their contents disclosed” unless certain exceptions apply); Wis. Stat. § 938.396 (“Law enforcement agency records of juveniles may not be open to inspection or their contents disclosed” unless certain exceptions apply).

Pursuant to the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) balancing test, the public interest in avoiding unnecessary intrusion into the personal lives of persons collaterally mentioned in a law enforcement report outweighs any public interest in information about the conduct of governmental affairs. Furthermore, the public interest in protecting the privacy of these individuals, and in facilitating cooperation with law enforcement in sensitive investigations, also outweighs any public interest in disclosure of this described information. *Cf. Linzmeyer*, 254 Wis. 2d 306, ¶ 38.

In addition to the overall redactions set forth thus far, certain other specific types of redactions were made from the records prior to release, for the reasons explained below.

Birthdates and driver's license numbers of individual persons were redacted to protect against identity theft or other unauthorized use following any subsequent disclosure. Pursuant to the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) balancing test, the public policy in favor of protecting the confidentiality of this economically valuable individually identifiable information and preventing its misuse upon any subsequent disclosure, as well as the public policies outlined in Wis. Stat. §§ 801.19, 801.20, and 801.21, outweigh any public interest in disclosure of this information.

Home addresses, home telephone numbers, and personal cellular telephone numbers were redacted pursuant to the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) balancing test. The public interest in disclosure of this information is outweighed by the public interest in the expectation of privacy on the part of individuals in their personal lives and in protecting the sources of law enforcement information and encouraging citizens to cooperate with law enforcement investigators without undue concern that their private lives will become public matters. *Cf.* Wis. Stat. § 19.31; *Linzmeier*, 254 Wis. 2d 306, ¶¶ 30, 32, 39, 41. Additionally, well-established public policy recognizing the confidentiality and privacy of the personal contact information of an employer's employees is expressed in Wis. Stat. § 19.36(10)(a). The same underlying public policy of protecting the confidentiality and privacy of personal contact information outweighs any public interest in disclosure of this information.

Photographs of driver's licenses were redacted pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 343.43(1)(f) and Wis. Admin. Code § Trans 102.205.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) files, accessed through the Wisconsin Department of Justice TIME System, which are provided to law enforcement personnel only and require training and certification to access, were redacted when contained in the investigative file in their original format, and where the information contained within those records is provided within the investigative report. The disclosure of such information by DOJ would significantly impair future information-sharing and other cooperative law enforcement efforts between DOJ and other government agencies. In performing the public records balancing test pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a), DOJ concluded the public interest in ensuring law enforcement access to DOT records and in cooperating with other government and law enforcement agencies outweighs any public interest in disclosure of this information. *Cf. Linzmeier*, 254 Wis. 2d 306, ¶¶ 30, 32, 39; *see also* 18 U.S.C. § 2721 et seq.; *New Richmond News v. City of New Richmond*, 2016 WI App 43, 881 N.W.2d 339.

Medical information was redacted pursuant to the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) balancing test. Well-established public policy recognizing the confidentiality and privacy of personal medical information is expressed in Wis. Stat. § 146.82 and the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). The same underlying public policy of protecting the confidentiality and privacy of personal medical information outweighs any public interest in disclosure of this information. *See also John K. MacIver Inst. for Pub. Policy, Inc. v. Erpenbach*, 2014 WI App 49, ¶ 19 & n.4, 354 Wis. 2d 591, 849 N.W.2d 888 (observing that “[p]ersonal finance or health information” may be subject to redaction as “purely personal” in an email that otherwise is subject to disclosure).

Emergency medical services (EMS) personnel working with the Kenosha Fire Department responded to the accident scene to provide medical care for Mr. Quinonez and his passenger. Specific information regarding their assessment of Mr. Quinonez and his passenger, as observed or reported by the EMS personnel or other witnesses, was redacted from the records in accordance with Wis. Stat. §§ 256.15(12) and 146.82(5)(c). To the extent the information is not directly governed by Wis. Stat. §§ 256.15(12) and 146.82(5)(c), pursuant to the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) balancing test, the same underlying public policy of protecting the confidentiality and privacy of personal medical information, as well as the

analogous restrictions on release of patient treatment information described under Wis. Stat. § 256.15(12), outweigh any public interest in disclosure of this information.

Specific information identifying routine shifts worked by law enforcement officers was redacted pursuant to the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) balancing test in the interest of preserving the safety of the officers, the officers' families, and the officers' homes. The public interest in protecting the security of the officers, the officers' families, and the officers' homes outweighs any public interest in information regarding their routine shifts. Details regarding the specific shifts worked by the officers involved in the April 8, 2020 incident were not redacted from the records.

Information containing specific details regarding weapons assigned to law enforcement personnel was redacted to preserve the safety, security, and effectiveness of the law enforcement officers. In performing the public records balancing test pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a), DOJ determined that the public interest in effective investigation of crime and protection of public safety, including protecting the ability of law enforcement to respond in emergency situations without jeopardizing officer safety or undermining officer effectiveness by revealing their equipment and techniques, outweighs any public interest in disclosure. *Cf.* Wis. Stat. § 19.31; *Linzmeier*, 254 Wis. 2d 306, ¶¶ 30, 32, 39, 41.

A firearms trace report provided confidentially to the Kenosha Police Department (KPD) by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms ("ATF") was redacted from case report **20-2618/87**. ATF provides firearms trace reports to law enforcement for internal use only, on the condition that firearms trace reports remain the property of ATF and may not be redistributed outside law enforcement without express authorization from ATF. ATF would not have provided this report to KPD without KPD's acceptance of those conditions. In performing the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) balancing test, DOJ determined there is a public interest in honoring the conditions under which ATF provided the report to KPD and in cooperating with ATF so as to encourage the current and future joint law enforcement efforts of our agencies. To not honor the conditions by disclosing the report would preclude future report-sharing and significantly impair cooperative law enforcement efforts between DOJ, KPD, and ATF. DOJ concluded that the public interest in effective investigation of crime and effective law enforcement, which is furthered by honoring the conditions under which ATF provided the firearm trace report to KPD, outweighs any public interest in disclosure by DCI of the ATF firearms trace report. *Cf.* *Linzmeier*, 254 Wis. 2d 306, ¶¶ 30, 32, 39.

As documented in the DCI case file, dispatch audio recordings, squad video recordings, and security camera recordings were collected by DCI for review. Due to space constraints, the very large investigatory file, and the time necessary to review this material, duplicative material or material that does not contain scenes or information of investigatory interest are not included in this release. To review this material and apply any required redactions would require substantial staff time and resources and be overly burdensome. The public records law does not impose such heavy burdens on a record custodian that normal functioning of the office would be severely impaired and does not require expenditure of excessive amounts of time and resources to respond to a public records request. *Schopper v. Gehring*, 210 Wis. 2d 208, 213, 565 N.W.2d 187 (Ct. App. 1997); *State ex rel. Gehl v. Connors*, 2007 WI App 238, ¶ 17, 306 Wis. 2d 247, 742 N.W.2d 530. DCI's review of these materials is documented in

individual reports within the DCI case file. Additional materials may be requested by specifying the report number. Such requests should be made through ordinary public records channels and will be processed accordingly.

Specific information that reveals the existence and/or location of residential security cameras employed by private citizens and the quantity and location of business security cameras was redacted pursuant to the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) balancing test. Release of this information could compromise the safety and security of individuals and their residences and the businesses, the individuals who work there, and visitors to the businesses. DOJ determined that the public interest in protecting the security of these individuals and their residences and the security of the businesses and the people who work or visit there outweighs any public interest in this detailed information regarding the security systems. Information regarding the results of DCI's canvass for and review of related surveillance video is documented in the reports.

Photographs of currency were redacted pursuant to the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) balancing test. Federal law prohibits the counterfeiting of United States securities, the uttering of and dealing in counterfeit securities, and the fraudulent using of paper as money or to procure something of value. *See* 18 U.S.C. §§ 471, 472, 473, 491. These federal statutes evidence the strong public interest in preventing any illegal counterfeiting and fraudulent activity that may arise from the use of photocopies and photographs of currency. There is also a strong public interest in protecting economically valuable information from misappropriation or misuse, as evidenced by Wis. Stat. § 19.36(13). Disclosure of this information could also undermine or impair law enforcement's ability to prevent counterfeiting and fraudulent activities. Therefore, in applying the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) balancing test, DOJ finds that the public interest in effective prevention of crime, and in protecting economically valuable information from misappropriation, misuse, or fraud, outweighs any public interest in disclosure of this information. *See* Wis. Stat. § 19.31; *Linzmeier*, 254 Wis. 2d 306, ¶¶ 30, 32, 39, 41; *Democratic Party of Wisconsin v. Wisconsin Dep't of Justice*, 2016 WI 100, ¶¶ 13, 18, 21, 372 Wis. 2d 460, 888 N.W.2d 584.

DCI report number **20-2618/93** documents DOJ's receipt of the autopsy and toxicology records for Mr. Quinonez, provided by the Kenosha County Medical Examiner's Office. The DCI report has been included with the released records; however, the attached records, provided by the medical examiner's office, have been wholly redacted from the release. Those records were provided to DOJ by the Kenosha County Medical Examiner's Office on the condition that the reports would not be shared with any person outside the criminal investigation, and the medical examiner's office would not provide the reports to DOJ without DOJ's agreement to those conditions. Pursuant to the Wis. Stat. § 19.35(1)(a) public records balancing test, there is a public interest in honoring the conditions under which the medical examiner's reports were provided to DOJ and in cooperating with the medical examiner's office so as to encourage the current and future joint law enforcement efforts of our agencies. To not honor the conditions by disclosing the reports would preclude future record-sharing and significantly impair cooperative law enforcement efforts between DOJ and the Kenosha County Medical Examiner's Office. The public interest in effective investigation of crime and effective law enforcement, which is furthered by honoring the conditions under which the Kenosha County Medical Examiner's Office provided the reports to DOJ, outweighs any

public interest in disclosure by DOJ of the report. *Cf. Linzmeyer*, 254 Wis. 2d 306, ¶¶ 30, 32, 39. If desired, the medical examiner's records may be requested directly from the Kenosha County Medical Examiner's Office records custodian.

Only one copy of records for which duplicate copies exist has been included with the records prepared for release. *Stone v. Bd. of Regents*, 2007 WI App 223, ¶ 20, 305 Wis. 2d 679, 741 N.W.2d 774.

The law permits DOJ to impose fees for certain "actual, necessary and direct" costs associated with responding to public records requests. Wis. Stat. § 19.35(3). Pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 19.35(3)(f), DOJ may require prepayment for the costs of locating (if applicable), copying, and mailing the requested records if the total amount exceeds \$5.00. Pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 19.35(3)(e), in this instance, DOJ is waiving its fees, and the records are being made available online at this time without any payment required.

Pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 19.35(4)(b), this determination is subject to review by mandamus under Wis. Stat. § 19.37(1) or upon application to a district attorney or the Attorney General.

Sincerely,



Paul M. Ferguson
Assistant Attorney General
Office of Open Government

PMF:hpw