

Hundreds ask for 'Justice for Geist' in rally outside police station

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Mike DeBernardo/KSL TV

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SALT LAKE CITY — Hundreds carrying "Justice for Geist" signs gathered outside the Salt Lake City Public Safety Building Saturday to show support for Sean Kendall, the owner of the dog shot and killed by a police officer two weeks ago.

Chanting crowds were asking for the police officer who shot Geist, a 110-pound Weimaraner, to be held accountable for inappropriate use of power.

Salt Lake City police officer Brett Olsen was searching for a missing toddler on June 18 when he encountered Geist in Kendall's backyard, near 2500 South and 1500 East. Olsen, a 10-year veteran with the department, said he shot Geist when the animal began showing aggression toward him.

At the rally Saturday, Kendall told the crowd he never expected so many people to show up.

"I am overwhelmed at the turnout," he said. "I have absolutely no idea the number of people (here)."

Both he and rally organizer Joy Dantine said they want the Salt Lake City Police Department to re-train officers on how to interact with dogs. Firearms should be used as a last resort, not the first, they say.

Kendall also wants Olsen fired for his actions.

"It's also been a very difficult, very painful time, going through the loss of my best friend," he said.

While an internal investigation is underway, Salt Lake City Police Chief Chris Burbank was quick to defend Olsen in comments he made at a press conference Friday.

"This is a seasoned officer who has tremendous experience and, in fact, has been under fire and performed very well," Burbank said.

As the investigation moves forward, Burbank said his department is reviewing its policies and consulting with the Humane Society of Utah.

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