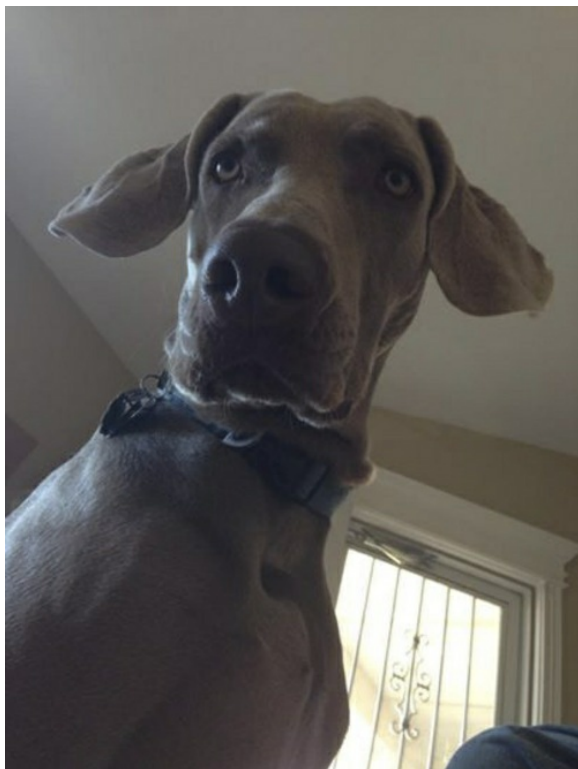


Salt Lake man wants police officer who killed his dog fired

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| Courtesy KUTV Channel 2 Geist, a 110-pound Weimaraner, was shot by Salt Lake City police as they were searching for a missing c

By Harry Stevens The Salt Lake Tribune · June 24, 2014 9:51 am

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A Salt Lake City man whose dog was killed by a police officer in its own backyard last Wednesday said he would not be satisfied unless the officer was fired from the force.

Sean Kendall, 27, met with high-ranking Salt Lake City police officials on Monday to discuss the fatal shooting of his 2-year-old Weimaraner, Geist. The dog was shot in the head by a police officer during a door-to-door search for a 3-year-old boy whose parents had reported him missing from their house near 2500 South and Fillmore Street.

The boy was eventually found asleep in his own basement.

Though the meeting was "productive," said Kendall, he remained "extremely frustrated and upset" at the apparent reluctance of the police to take action against the officer who shot his dog.

"The only thing that I would be satisfied with is having this officer terminated," said Kendall. "I feel that his judgment was completely inappropriate."

The officer remains on duty while the department conducts an internal investigation.

Kendall has not said whether he will pursue legal action against the department, but he believes his rights were violated when the officer entered his property and shot his dog. Kendall's attorney, Brett Boulton, said he believes his client should be compensated, though he did not have a dollar amount in mind.

"That's what we do in the legal system," said Boulton. "We pay people money when bad things happen."

But Sgt. Greg Wilking said the officer did not break the law when he entered Kendall's backyard.

"There are extenuating circumstances," said Wilking. "A child is missing, and if you're a parent, you would want us to look everywhere for your child. We wouldn't want to leave any stone unturned."

Wilking declined to comment on whether the officer acted properly when he chose to use lethal force against the dog.

"I wasn't in that situation. The officer did what he did in the moment to avoid being bitten, possibly," said Wilking.

In addition to asking for the officer's termination, Kendall wants the Salt Lake City police to train its officers to handle dogs "so that this situation doesn't happen again."

Wilking acknowledged that officers are not specifically trained to deal with aggressive dogs.

"Maybe that's something that we're going to be looking at and addressing," he said.

Kendall also wants the Legislature to pass a law recognizing pets as family members rather than as property.

The idea that his dog was "just a piece of property, no different than a vehicle, a piece of lawn furniture, doesn't sit well with me," said Kendall.

"I'm devastated, to be honest," he added. "Geist was a member of my family. At times he was the only thing, the only person, the only comfort that I had."

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