

## Burbank Defends Police Department Amid Outrage Over Dog Shooting

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The Salt Lake City Police Department is investigating the actions of a police officer who shot and killed a dog while searching for a missing child in Sugar House. Meanwhile, Police Chief Chris Burbank says the vitriol aimed at his officers as a result of the incident has gone too far.

Earlier this month, Officer Brett Olsen entered Sean Kendall's backyard through an unlocked gate while searching for a missing child. Saying he felt threatened, Olsen shot dead Kendall's 2-year-old Weimaraner named Geist.

The incident prompted a backlash on social media with a dedicated to the shooting and angry tweets. And on Thursday the Salt Lake City Council sent a letter to Police Chief Chris Burbank asking for answers and encouraging the department to provide officers additional dog-behavior training.

Sitting on her front porch with her three dogs, City Council Member Erin Mendenhall says the incident is alarming.

“There’s not a lot of space once you get into someone’s backyard before you’re going to interact with an animal,” Mendenhall says. “I do want our police force to thoroughly search for a missing child when there is one and the procedure is followed. But I also think as residents we need to feel like our backyards are safe places for our kids and our pets.”

“That pig that shot the dog needs to be executed too,” Chief Burbank read from an email the department received since the shooting.

He says he sympathizes with the tragic loss of a family pet. But he says the way some are expressing their outrage has gone too far.

“After 23 years in law enforcement, I haven’t seen this type of public outcry when certain human beings have lost their lives,” Burbank says. “I’m not here to minimize any particular incident and especially not this one, but perspective has been lost.”

Burbank declined to go into detail about the incident as two separate investigations are underway. But he says evidence shows the dog was very near Officer Olson when he fired the fatal shot.

Brett Olsen was one of the police officers responsible for taking down a lone gunman during a 2007 shooting at Trolley Square. He will remain on duty during the investigation.