Black leaders seek charges for officers in Clark shooting

BY TONY BIZjak, NASHELLY CHAVEZ AND DALE KASLER

A Sacramento County coroner’s office spokeswoman said an autopsy was conducted last Tuesday and the body has been released to a funeral home. A report will be sent to the district attorney’s office for its investigation, coroner’s spokeswoman Kim Gin said. “If they file charges against anyone for the homicide, the report is not released until after the trial is adjudicated. If the DA declines filing charges, the report is released.”

Williams, president of the NAACP’s Sacramento branch, said she told Sacramento police family members were about to view the 22-year-old’s body “in preparation for an independent autopsy. … No family should have to endure this pain and suffering as they try to seek answers for the execution of their loved one who was only holding a cellphone.”

“We will stand up for Stephon, we will speak up for Stephon … until we get justice,” said Crump, who also represented the families of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown — two victims of racially charged killings who became household names.

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Williams, president of the NAACP’s Sacramento branch, said she told Sacramento police.

Former NBA star and Sacramento Matt Barnes plans march for shooting victim.

Florida civil rights attorney Benjamin Crump, who is representing Clark’s family, said they have begun talking to the U.S. Justice Department’s civil rights division about investigating the killing, after they failed to get a response from Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert.

“The DA didn’t respond to us, and that gives us a leg to stand on” to contact federal officials, Huffman, head of the California NAACP, said in an interview afterward.

Sheila Orio, spokesman for the DA’s office, said in an interview that Schubert’s chief deputy Steve Grippi spoke to NAACP officials late Friday afternoon as well as Monday, and “we are in the process of setting up a meeting.”

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SEE STEPHON CLARK, 2A

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Chief Daniel Hahn that the NAACP is talking to the federal Justice Department about the case. "He wasn’t happy about it," she said. "But he didn’t disapprove of it." A Justice Department spokesman, Devin O’Malley, declined comment.

Speaking Monday afternoon to The Sacramento Bee, Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg declined to offer an opinion on the idea of an outside investigation, but did not dismiss the possibility. "We ought to be open to the conversation, but I am not ready to make a conclusion," he said.

Steinberg said the city has asked police chief Hahn and district attorney Schubert to attend a 5 p.m. City Council meeting on Tuesday and make a 10-minute presentation each on what their offices are doing to investigate the shooting.

The council will then turn the microphone over to the public for what Steinberg says is the start of a public discussion of where the city, the police and the community go from here.

For his part, Steinberg said he does not believe the shooting was a racist act, but he said the city must confront implicit bias in everyday life and in police and community relations. "I do not believe that these officers or the Police Department are racist," Steinberg said. "However, implicit and structural racism pervades every aspect of American life, including education, law enforcement and public safety. And to talk about the tragic death of Stephon Clark without acknowledging that and viewing it through this lens would be wrong."

Steinberg said the council will hold another hearing on April 10 to begin a more specific conversation with police, the community and experts about open and accountable, first by putting body cameras on police officers last year, and by changing its policy on releasing shooting video — from a no-release policy to a quick release in the Clark shooting.

Crack’s grandmother, Sequita Thompson, also spoke at the Monday morning press conference in the City Hall rotunda, recounting in a barely audible voice how she looked out in her backyard and saw her grandson’s body on the ground.

"They didn’t have to kill him like that, they didn’t have to shoot him that many times," she said, before she collapsed in Crump’s arms and was led away. "My great-grand-babies don’t have their daddy."

Moments later, Clark’s brother Stevante Clark went to the podium and led a brief chant of Clark’s name before walking out of City Hall.

Clark’s shooting has sparked a series of protests. A march led by Black Lives Matter on Thursday forced the closure of Golden 1 Center before a Sacramento Kings game; the game proceeded with only about 2,000 fans in attendance. Two protests Friday turned occasionally volatile and violent, with marchers jumping on police cars, blocking downtown and midtown traffic and berating motorists. One person was arrested over the weekend for breaking a bus window.

Black Lives Matter said on Twitter that it plans to hold protests in front of the district attorney’s office Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoon, demanding that criminal charges get filed against the two police officers who shot Clark.

City Councilman Steve Hansen, who attended Monday’s press conference, said he sympathizes with the protesters: “Their calls have to be answered for change and justice.”

Clark’s funeral is scheduled for Thursday, with national civil rights leaders the Rev. Al Sharpton scheduled to attend. Sharpton will deliver the eulogy at the family’s request,” said the Rev. Shane Harris of the National Action Network, a civil rights group founded by Sharpton.