

Maples From Front

names during an interview on Tuesday and said the city intends to release the names of those involved after the internal investigation is completed, explaining that personnel records connected to the ongoing investigation are not currently subject to disclosure in the same manner they will be after the process concludes.

"I know why people are wanting the names released," Gaffney said during the interview with the Central Record. "I also want to make sure that we're doing it appropriately and by policy and by statute."

The circumstances surrounding Maples' injuries are sharply disputed.

According to a citation summary filed by Allen, police were initially contacted by a man involved in an ongoing neighbor dispute with Maples. The man told police Maples had placed a no-trespassing sign on his property and had driven two pipes into the ground with string stretched between them in what Allen described in the citation as an attempt to establish a "false property line."

The complaining neighbor also alleged that Maples had threatened him several times with a large stick after crossing onto his property.

Allen wrote that he and Taylor followed the neighbor to the property, where officers viewed survey information on the neighbor's phone. Pingleton later arrived, and all three officers then went to Maples' home at 107 Colony Road.

According to the citation, Maples met the officers at his door while Taylor attempted to tell him not to enter the neighboring property or harass the neighbor.

Police allege Maples then said he intended to call the sheriff before pushing the door with both hands, causing it to strike Taylor in the face. Allen further alleged that when Taylor attempted to detain Maples, Maples struck the lieutenant in the jaw or neck area with a closed fist.

The citation states that officers took Maples to the ground, where he continued resisting before being handcuffed. Police reported that EMS was called immediately after officers noticed lacerations on Maples' arms and face and that officers rendered first aid before an ambulance transported him to Fort Logan Hospital in Stanford.

Maples was cited and released from police custody following treatment. According to attorney Ephraim Helton, who is representing Maples, the criminal case remained active. The citation lists an Oct. 12 arraignment in Garrard County.

Maples' family gives a substantially different account.

His grandson, Ronnie Lee Maples, said his grandfather had been dealing with repeated problems involving neighbors behind his home and believed they had been trespassing on his property. He said Ronald Maples put up a no-trespassing sign, which was later taken down and left on his porch.

Ronnie Lee said his grandfather contacted law enforcement after discovering the sign had been removed.

According to the grandson, his grandfather was holding the knob of the screen door when officers pulled it open, pulling Maples outward and into the officer.

"He doesn't remember hardly anything from that point on other than him on the ground," Ronnie Lee said.

The family disputes the allegation that Maples intentionally struck an officer with the door or punched Taylor.

Ronnie Lee said his grandfather suffered four broken vertebrae, a fractured jaw, severe injuries to his left hand and bruising to his face. He said physicians later removed damaged skin from the top of Maples' hand after the tissue died.

He also said Maples has experienced numbness in his right arm and difficulty using his legs since the incident,

although the full extent and long-term consequences of his injuries remain unclear.

Helton, Maples' attorney, described the injuries as among the most serious he has encountered in decades of legal practice.

"I've practiced law 44 years, getting ready to go on 45, and I think it's the worst beating I've ever seen by law enforcement of another individual, especially an 84-year-old individual," Helton said.

Helton said he visited Maples' home after being retained by the family and observed blood inside the residence and on the porch.

He also challenged the officers' description of the encounter involving the storm door, calling the door thin and lightweight and saying he did not believe the circumstances described by police adequately explained what happened.

"I'm 215 pounds, six foot three. If I'd been there pushing hard and a deputy had been on the other side there would be no way I could have pushed it in a way where it would have caused any harm to him. I mean... for them to say that he assaulted them by doing that, it defies common sense and physics," Helton said.

Helton said Maples also suffered injuries around and behind his ear and may ultimately require additional treatment for his hand. He said the family has not yet determined what damages it may seek because the full extent of Maples' medical condition is still developing.

"Unfortunately, we've learned by representing people in child abuse cases, that if you ever have injuries behind somebody's ear, that is indicative of abuse," Helton said. "You cannot do that without abusing somebody."

The attorney also disputed the police account of the property disagreement. He said survey pins at the property correspond with the boundary markers that had been placed and argued that any disagreement over the location of the property line should have been resolved through a civil proceeding rather than by police.

The citation, however, states that officers viewed plats on the complaining neighbor's phone and believed Maples had marked an inaccurate property line, a determination that Helton said the officers were not qualified to make.

Another disputed issue involves an alleged easement across Maples' property.

Ronnie Lee and Helton said the neighbors had represented that the mayor granted them permission, or an easement, to use part of Maples' property. They said Maples or members of his family later checked with city officials and were told no such permission had been granted.

No documentation establishing such an easement was included in the materials reviewed by the Central Record.

Ronnie Lee said his grandfather has lived a quiet life and has no history of causing trouble. Helton similarly said a records check showed Maples had no criminal record.

Family members also described Maples as severely hard of hearing and having poor eyesight, conditions they say are important to understanding how the interaction with police may have unfolded.

Mayor Gaffney said the internal investigation will be conducted within the police department because the interim chief is not alleged to have been involved in the incident.

The investigation is expected to include interviews with officers, Maples and any available witnesses, along with a search for video or other evidence that might document the encounter.

"They run their fact-finding, and they gather all the information that they can," Gaffney said. "They do interviews of all parties that are available to interview."

Investigators also will seek any video that may exist from vehicles, residential doorbell cameras or other sources.

One potentially significant

source of evidence will not be available; Lancaster police officers do not currently use body cameras.

Gaffney said body cameras had been under discussion before Friday's incident and that he and a city council member had already been researching options to present to the council.

The mayor said the encounter involving Maples reinforces his belief that Lancaster should move forward with the equipment.

"From a transparency and accountability perspective, as far as I'm concerned, I definitely think it's time that we make that investment and move forward with having body cameras for our department," Gaffney said.

He said body cameras can protect both residents and officers by providing an objective record when accounts of an encounter differ.

"It helps take the guess out of any situation that may come up," Gaffney said. "It specifically takes out the, for lack of a better term, the he said, she said."

Gaffney said he is "110% behind" pursuing the equipment and wants cameras placed on Lancaster officers as quickly as reasonably possible.

There is no fixed deadline for completing the internal investigation.

Gaffney said the city intends to balance the need for a thorough review against the public interest in resolving the matter promptly.

"We want to be thorough, but we also don't want to drag it out," he said.

The suspension of three patrol officers has also created an immediate staffing problem for the department.

Gaffney said with the three officers now suspended, the city will have four full-time patrol officers and one part-time officer available to fill shifts, along with the interim chief.

The Garrard County Sheriff's Office has agreed to assist Lancaster police as necessary.

Gaffney said Interim Chief Rick Shear and Sheriff Willie Skeens have held several discussions about cooperation between the agencies and that the sheriff's office is willing to provide support when Lancaster needs additional coverage.

"The sheriff's department is more than willing to help us out wherever and whenever we need it," Gaffney said.

He said officials will determine whether the reduced staffing requires additional overtime or scheduling changes as the department adjusts.

Meanwhile, Maples' family has been sharing responsibility for caring for him.

Ronnie Lee said his father, stepmother and stepsisters have been assisting Maples as he recovers. He said Maples has also received support from members of Redemption Road Church, where the family says he has been involved for approximately four decades.

Helton said he has sent preservation letters seeking to ensure that evidence connected

to the case is retained. He also said he has pursued records related to officers involved in the incident.

The criminal allegations against Maples had not been dismissed as of Helton's interview with the Central Record. Helton said the case appeared under case number 26-F-00109 with an arraignment scheduled for Oct. 12.

Helton said he believes the charges should be dismissed, but prosecutors and the court will ultimately determine how the criminal case proceeds.

The city's internal investigation will separately determine whether the officers violated

departmental policies or procedures.

Gaffney emphasized that the officers' suspension should not be interpreted as a finding that the allegations against them have been proven.

"Every individual involved is entitled to due process, and no conclusions regarding the allegations will be made until the investigation has been completed," he said.

The mayor said appropriate action will be taken once investigators establish the facts.

"Because this is an ongoing investigation," Gaffney said, "no further details will be released at this time."

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STUDENT of the MONTH!

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Online Tax Pay From Front

don't want to mail checks in anymore, and they like that convenience."

Skeens said the payment

portal will be live on the sheriff's office website by Oct. 1. "You can get online, pay your tax bill from the comfort of your home right on our website. So that's the biggest news that we've had."