

## **Lewis County Calls Negligence Lawsuit "Baseless Claims"**

### **Local News**

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CHEHALIS, Wash. - Lewis County and other named individuals vehemently deny the allegations made in a lawsuit filed on October 15, 2012 by the Estate of a man who was shot and killed by a Lewis County Sheriff's Deputy in June of 2011. The Complaint, filed in federal court in Tacoma, alleges that the Deputy acted recklessly and negligently when he encountered Steven Petersen in the early morning hours of June 20, 2011, and engaged in a "shoot first, ask questions later" approach to law enforcement. The Complaint seeks an unspecified amount of damages.

"Lewis County vehemently denies that Deputy Matt McKnight acted recklessly or negligently in any way," said Michael Patterson, defense counsel for the County. "Deputy McKnight was faced with a rapidly-unfolding situation involving a man reported to be carrying a large knife that he had used to attempt to break and enter a residence nearby. In fear of his own safety and that of the neighboring residents, he made the split-second decision to shoot, after Mr. Petersen refused to follow commands, refused to take his hand out of his pocket, and lunged at him in a threatening manner. That action was in accordance with his training in such situations." "After a thorough investigation by the Critical Incident Response Team, led by the Thurston County Sheriff's Office, the Lewis County Prosecutor declined to bring any criminal charges against Deputy McKnight, determining that no criminal law had been violated by Deputy McKnight's actions. A separate Safety Review Board found that the Deputy properly complied with Sheriff's Office policies and procedures during the incident, and that those policies and procedures provided adequate guidance for such situations." "No Deputy wants to be involved in this type of situation," said Lewis County Sheriff Steve Mansfield. "However, the safety of the public and of our deputies is our primary concern and Deputy McKnight did everything he was supposed to do when he came into contact with Mr. Petersen last summer. This incident has not been easy for anyone. We are sorry for the effect of Mr. Petersen's death on everyone involved." Lewis County will vigorously defend these baseless claims.