

SAC COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Sac County Attorney Ben Smith

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sac City, Iowa

Sac County Attorney Addresses Mortensen Investigation

Sac City, Iowa, June 30, 2023 – To ensure transparency and address public concerns relative to community safety, Sac County Attorney Ben Smith released the below statement speaking to law enforcement's investigation and findings concerning the injury sustained by Stanely "Sam" Mortensen II (Sam Mortensen) last month.

On Saturday, May 20, 2023, at around 1:00 a.m., 50-year-old Sam Mortensen was found unconscious at the 100 block of West 4th Street in Lake View, with an apparent head injury, which immediately raised concerns of a potential assault. Mortensen, who regained consciousness at the scene, was transported by ambulance to Loring Hospital and later life-flighted to Methodist Hospital in Des Moines after his condition worsened.

Days after the incident, the Sac County Sheriff's Office took over the case at the Lake View Police Department's request. Over the past month, the Sheriff's Office's experienced investigators and other law enforcement officials collected physical evidence, conducted more than 30 witness interviews, served numerous search warrants and subpoenas, reviewed thousands of documents and text messages, and followed up on all tips and leads.

After carefully analyzing all available investigative information provided to me by the Sheriff's Office, I have determined that, at present, the available evidence demonstrates Mortensen's head injury was likely the direct result of a fall caused by a medical condition for which he had been previously treated, exacerbated by health issues Mortensen was experiencing at the time and not the consequence of any criminal act.

The turning point in the investigation came when investigators closely scrutinized security camera recordings that captured audio and peripheral-visual evidence of the events preceding the discovery of Mortensen unconscious. Together with other objectively definitive data, including, but not limited to, Mortensen's medical history, these recordings prove, near conclusively, neither James McKellar nor Jennifer Roeder assaulted Mortensen and that Mortensen sustained his injury after losing consciousness and hitting his head on the concrete road.

The Sac County Sheriff and I disclosed the evidence supporting our investigative findings to Mortensen's family at a meeting on June 27, 2023. This briefing aimed to ensure that Mortensen's family understood the factual basis and reasoning supporting our conclusions, to provide them the transparency they deserve.

The proliferation of false rumors about the cause of Mortensen's injury, specifically, the culpability of James McKellar and Jennifer Roeder, who were observed near Mortensen minutes before he was found unconscious, was traced to early suspicions the responding officer relayed to medical professionals tending to Mortensen. Although the officer's theory was based on a speculative assessment that followed a cursory examination of the scene, the ER doctor mistakenly presented it to Mortensen's family as fact.

As the chief law enforcement officer of Sac County, I am committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all residents within the County. I sincerely hope that you, my constituents, will accept the present investigation's findings, alleviating any further distress for those accused of wrongdoing and allowing Mortensen to recover in peace.

Per the policies of the Sac County Attorney's Office, the investigation into this matter will remain active until the statute of limitations expires. Accordingly, anyone with firsthand information or who had direct observation of how Mortensen received the injury to his head is asked to contact Sac County Sheriff's Office's Detectives at (712) 662-7127.

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