

NEWS RELEASE

Spencer B. Merriweather III
District Attorney

August 23, 2019

DA to seek independent investigations of future officer-involved shootings

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Today, District Attorney Spencer B. Merriweather III is announcing his intention to seek independent investigations of all future officer-involved shootings that result in a fatality or serious injury. DA Merriweather is requesting the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation to conduct the criminal investigations of such incidents in Mecklenburg County.

This new policy will take effect as soon as a protocol is developed that addresses many operational concerns, including standard procedures enabling local police to secure the scene until SBI investigators can arrive to assume command of the investigation. When the SBI completes its investigation of an officer-involved shooting, the SBI will turn over the investigation to the District Attorney's Office to determine whether the evidence supports criminal charges. Presently, every police department in Mecklenburg County, except the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, already turns over the investigation of officer-involved shootings to the SBI. This move will now ensure that an independent authority will similarly investigate all officer-involved shootings within Mecklenburg County.

“CMPD has conducted professional and extraordinarily thorough investigations of shootings involving the department's officers, and the District Attorney's Office has been confident in the integrity of those investigations,” says DA Merriweather. “Nevertheless, just as we counsel our prosecutors and staff against the appearance of a conflict of interest, we must do what we can to ensure we avoid perceived conflict in these investigations whenever possible. The criminal justice system cannot – and should not – function without public confidence.”

Charlotte's Citizens Review Board recently invited DA Merriweather to its Aug. 27 meeting to discuss the Board's recommendation for independent investigations of officer-involved shootings. In fact, DA Merriweather has been exploring this option for months and has begun working to develop a plan for its implementation. He plans to attend the Board's meeting to share more information about this process.

DA Merriweather has notified SBI Director Bob Schurmeier and CMPD Chief Kerr Putney of this decision, and he is working with both officials to develop appropriate protocols for these investigations.

Note: For more information about the District Attorney's Office, visit www.charmeckda.com. For updates and other information, “like” the DA's Office on Facebook at www.facebook.com/charmeckda and follow us on Twitter: @CharMeckDA.

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