



MINIARD CULPEPPER

617-635-3510
district.7@boston.gov

BOSTON CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 7

August 3, 2026

Dear Council Colleagues,

Earlier this year in April, this body considered Docket #2026-0872, a resolution calling for the temporary suspension of correctional staff involved in the December 2025 in-custody death of Shacoby Kenny. I was disappointed that the resolution did not receive the votes necessary for adoption.

A significant portion of the debate surrounding Docket #2026-0872 focused on Section 17G of the Boston City Charter, which prohibits the City Council from "taking part in the appointment or removal of any City or County employee." However, Section 17G governs only City and County employees. Since 2009, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department has operated as an independent state agency, and its employees are state employees, not City or County employees. As a result, Section 17G did not prevent the Council from expressing its policy position regarding appropriate administrative action by the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department.

On July 21, 2026, the Massachusetts Office of the Chief Medical Examiner determined that the manner of Shacoby Kenny's death was homicide and found that the cause of death was hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy due to resuscitated cardiac arrest during physical restraint by correction officers. This substantially changes the circumstances before us and heightens the need for appropriate administrative action while that investigation proceeds.

On July 29, I transmitted the attached letter to Acting Suffolk County Sheriff, Mark Lawhorne, renewing my request that the officers directly involved in the use of force against Mr. Kenny be placed on administrative leave pending the completion of the Attorney General's investigation. Please see the attached letter below.

I ask you to join me in urging the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department to place the officers directly involved in the use of force against Mr. Kenny on administrative leave while the Attorney General completes the investigation and to support the accompanying resolution. Regardless of how each of us voted on Docket #2026-0872, the Medical Examiner's homicide determination presents materially different circumstances that warrant renewed action by this Council. Taking this position does not prejudice the outcome of the investigation. Rather, it demonstrates our commitment to accountability, transparency, due process, and maintaining public confidence in our criminal justice institutions.

Sincerely,

Miniard Culpepper

Boston City Councilor | District 7



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BOSTON CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 7

July 29, 2026

The Honorable Special Sheriff Mark Lawhorne
Suffolk County Sheriff's Department
20 Bradston Street
Boston, MA 02118

Dear Sheriff Lawhorne,

I write following the recent determination by the Massachusetts Office of the Chief Medical Examiner that Shacoby Kenny's death was a homicide. That significant finding amplifies my request that the correction officers directly involved in the use of force and restraint of Mr. Kenny on December 7, 2025, immediately be placed on administrative leave pending the conclusion of the Massachusetts Attorney General's investigation.

Administrative leave following a death involving the use of force is a well-established practice among law enforcement and correctional agencies because it protects both the integrity of investigations and the rights of employees while the facts are established.

While your office stated that, since April, "all officers in question" involved in Mr. Kenny's death "continue to be" assigned to non-contact roles within the jail, the Department has not communicated when these reassignments took effect. Nor has it disclosed how many officers were reassigned from their regular duties, or whether any officers who responded to the December 7 incident and used force against Mr. Kenny remained in positions involving contact with individuals in custody following an incident that the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has now ruled a homicide.

The failure to place the officers involved on administrative leave also raises serious concerns for the individuals who witnessed Mr. Kenny's death and remain detained at the Suffolk County House of Correction. These individuals continue to live and interact within an institution in which the officers implicated in Mr. Kenny's death remain employed. This creates a potential culture of intimidation for witnesses who may possess information relevant to the ongoing investigation and may reasonably fear retaliation or adverse treatment for coming forward. It also creates a real risk to the safety of other individuals in custody if officers directly involved in the use of force that resulted in Mr. Kenny's death remain in active service pending the completion of the investigation.



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In light of the Chief Medical Examiner's determination, I intend to file a new resolution at the upcoming Boston City Council meeting on Wednesday, August 5. Earlier this year, my colleagues on the Boston City Council and I filed Docket #2026-0870, an Order for a Hearing to Examine the Circumstances Surrounding In-Custody Deaths at the Suffolk County House of Correction and Systemic Factors Contributing to Mortality in Custody. We also filed Docket #2026-0871, a Resolution Calling for an Independent Investigation into the In-Custody Death of Shacoby Kenny at the Suffolk County House of Correction.

The hearing on Docket #2026-0870 is expected to take place in September. In advance of that hearing, I respectfully request a meeting with you and the Department's General Counsel, Melissa Garand, J.D., to discuss the Department's response to Mr. Kenny's death, the status of the officers involved, and the Department's participation and cooperation in preparation for the hearing.

Mr. Kenny's family has waited months for answers regarding his death. They deserve confidence that every reasonable administrative safeguard is being employed while the Attorney General completes the investigation. The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department has an opportunity to provide that confidence by granting this request.

I look forward to meeting with you and General Counsel Forbes and to working cooperatively with the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department in preparation for the Council's September hearing.

Sincerely,

Miniard Culpepper

Boston City Councilor | District 7

cc: Superintendent Michael Lally

General Counsel, Melissa Garand, J.D