

Man shot, killed by police in n. Mpls.

A vocal but peaceful crowd gathered near the scene late Saturday to confront officers.

By LIZ SAWYER AND TIM HARLOW • Star Tribune staff

A tense crowd remained gathered near midnight Saturday at the north Minneapolis site where police shot and killed a man they say was firing a handgun as he walked in the neighborhood.

Police Chief Medaria Arradondo quickly arrived at the scene of the 6 p.m. shooting, urging calm as the news rapidly spread that the man who had been shot was black. As of 11:30 p.m., there had been no violence or arrests, although some people were briefly detained for questioning.

At a late-night news conference at City Hall with Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, Arradondo stressed that the investigation of the shooting, to be led by the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, will be “absolutely transparent” and include public release as soon as possible of body cam footage from the officers involved.

“Public trust is absolutely cornerstone to what I want to see in terms of our culture at the Minneapolis Police Department,” Arradondo said. He told the North Side community that “they can be assured there will be a fair and thorough investigation.”

According to police, just before 5:30 p.m., at least two people called 911 to report that a man walking in the 4700 block of Bryant Avenue N. was firing a silver 9mm handgun into the air and ground. The callers provided a detailed description of the suspect.

Officers confronted the man

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◀ **SHOT** from BI and a “foot chase ensued that ended in shots being fired,” a police statement said. The man died at the spot where he was shot behind a garage in the alley between Aldrich and Bryant avenues N.

Relatives identified him as Thurman Blevins, 30.

A member of the police department familiar with the investigation but not authorized to speak to the media said Saturday night that a gun was found at the scene. The source said at least one officer’s body camera captured footage of the shooting.

Late into the night, neighborhood residents, Blevins’ family members and friends, and activists remained at the scene. Some stood behind police tape at the corner of 48th and Camden avenues N., shouting at a line of officers who stood silently, their hands folded in front of them. The officers were not wearing riot gear.

“When are you gonna stop killing us? That could be any of our sons!” some in the crowd yelled. Others shouted, “Hands up! Don’t shoot!” an oft-used chant at protests against police shootings of black men.

Some in the crowd shared accounts of the shooting that differed from that of police, some of it provided by eyewitnesses, other tidbits the result of unverified but rapidly spreading rumors.

City Council Member Jeremiah Ellison tried to comfort distraught residents. “The threshold for a police shooting needs to be extremely high — whether there’s a weapon or not,” he said. “I’m not sure what justice looks like yet.”

Nekima Levy-Pounds, former president of the Minneapolis NAACP, and John Thompson, who became a prominent activist after the July 2016 police shooting of his friend Philando Castile by a St. Anthony police officer, were among activists who came to the scene.

Blevins’ death is the latest



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John Thompson, activist and friend of Philando Castile, arrived near the scene of an officer-involved shooting Saturday in the alley between Bryant and Aldrich avenues N.

police killing of a black man in the Twin Cities. While Castile’s shooting drew the most attention, the November 2015 death of Jamar Clark at the hands of Minneapolis police also inspired widespread protests. Nationally, last week’s police shooting of 17-year-old Antwon Rose in Pittsburgh has been the most recent such death to spark intense protests.

Shooting accounts vary

According to Katya Kelly, the sister of Blevins’ girlfriend, officers shot Blevins as he ran from them. Kelly said Blevins and his girlfriend had been drinking and that he had a bottle in his hand as the two walked to Kelly’s house.

Police confronted Blevins and told him not to move, said witness James Lark. Officers then used a Taser on Blevins, who tried to run away, witnesses said. That’s when shots rang out.

“I heard nine, 10, 11, 12 shots,” Lark said. “They opened up on him right there in the alley.”

Eva Watson, who also witnessed the shooting, said Blevins was drinking out of an Amsterdam vodka bottle with his girlfriend and a toddler in

a stroller nearby.

A squad car rolled past, then another parked in the street, she said. Officers yelled at him to put his hands up. He was starting to comply when he was tased, she said.

Then he took off running, she said, as police yelled for him to stop. She said he was yelling, “Don’t shoot!”

Watson said she heard more than a dozen shots. “He didn’t have a gun or anything,” she said. “He was just sitting there. He got killed for nothing.”

Kelly said she told Blevins’ girlfriend to call police. “I don’t know if I can call the police if the police are the ones who shot him,” the girlfriend said.

At their news conference, Frey and Arradondo acknowledged the uncertainty and emotional trauma gripping the community. “No matter what transpired in the moments leading up to the shooting, the outcome is a tragedy,” Frey said.

Staff photographer Aaron Lavinsky contributed to this report.

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