



**Commission of
Correction**

**Final Report of the
New York State Commission of Correction:**

In the Matter of the Death of

**Stephen Pawlowski,
an incarcerated individual of the
Otsego County Jail**

June 28, 2022

**To: Sheriff Richard J. Devlin Jr.
Otsego County Sheriff's Office
172 County Highway 33 West
Cooperstown, New York 13326**

Allen Riley
Chairman

Thomas J. Loughren
Commissioner

Yolanda Canty
Commissioner

GREETINGS:

WHEREAS, the Medical Review Board has reported to the NYS Commission of Correction pursuant to Correction Law, section 47(1)(d), regarding the death of Stephen Pawlowski who died on June 19, 2021 , as a result of circumstances which occurred while an incarcerated individual in the custody of the Otsego County Sheriff at the Otsego County Jail, the Commission has determined that the following final report be issued.

FINDINGS:

1. Stephen Pawlowski was a 45-year-old male who died on 6/19/21 while in the custody of the Otsego County Sheriff at the Otsego County Jail. Pawlowski died as a result of a suicidal hanging.
2. Pawlowski was born in Mount Kisco, NY. He was survived by his wife, three children, his parents, and five siblings. Pawlowski attended North Carolina State University and graduated with a degree in forestry. Pawlowski also attended Binghamton University where he graduated with a nursing degree. Pawlowski continued his education at the University of Scranton where he completed the nursing anesthesia program and was employed at Bassett Medical Center as a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist. Pawlowski reported that he had served in Afghanistan six years prior in the medical field and that he was still active in the United States Army.
3. [REDACTED]
4. [REDACTED]
5. [REDACTED]
6. On 6/15/21 at 5:10 p.m., Pawlowski was transported by the Otsego County Sheriff's Office to the Otsego County Jail for a civil commitment on a Family Court Warrant.
7. On 6/15/21 at 5:12 p.m., Officer A.S. saw Pawlowski in the intake area for the admission process into the Otsego County Jail. Officer A.S. completed the initial risk assessment, classification, and suicide screening report. Pawlowski scored a "3" in the suicide screening report for previous heavy alcohol use, having an emotionally flat behavior, and being angry about his current charges. Officer A.S. documented that Pawlowski was cooperative and pleasant throughout the booking process and that there was no need for increased supervision at that time. Pawlowski was referred for routine mental health

and medical services.

8. [REDACTED]

9. [REDACTED]

10. On 6/16/21 at 6:47 p.m., Pawlowski was released from custody by order of the Court.

11. On 6/17/21 at 3:19 p.m., Pawlowski was remanded to the Otsego County Jail for a charge of Criminal Contempt 1st Degree. The Summary of Charge comments indicated that Pawlowski was to be brought in front of the Otsego County Supreme Court prior to being released. Even if Pawlowski was bailed outside of normal court hours, he must be held until he could be brought in front of a Supreme Court Judge.

12. On 6/17/21 at 3:51 p.m., Officer R.S. saw Pawlowski in the intake area for the admission process into the Otsego County Jail. Officer R.S. completed the initial risk assessment, classification, and suicide screening report. Pawlowski scored a "2" in the suicide screening report for claims to being in recovery for over a year and for having an emotionally flat behavior. Officer R.S. documented that Pawlowski was coherent and cooperative but emotionally flat during the screening. Officer R.S. recommended that Pawlowski be put on a 15-minute mental health special watch that was approved by Sergeant (Sgt.) B.R. Pawlowski was referred for routine mental health and medical services. Pawlowski was assigned to be housed on B-Wing Housing Unit 107 in Cell #1.

13. [REDACTED]

14. [REDACTED]

15. [REDACTED].
16. On 6/19/21 at 6:50 a.m., Officer C.G. began his shift on B-Wing Housing Unit 107. Facility documentation indicated that Officer C.G. performed his 15-minute rounds from 7:00 a.m. until 11:04 a.m. when he left the unit for a lunch break. Prior to Officer C.G. leaving the unit for his lunch break, he did rounds at 11:00 a.m. During those rounds, Pawlowski asked Officer C.G. if he could have Ibuprofen and an antacid when the lunch trays were delivered to the unit. Officer C.G. told Pawlowski that he would notify the next officer of his request because he was going on break.
17. On 6/19/21 at 11:04 a.m., Officer J.H. relieved Officer C.G. on B-Wing Housing Unit 107 for a lunch break. Officer C.G. gave Officer J.H. a report on the three incarcerated individuals on the unit that were on a special 15-minute watch. At 11:14 a.m., Officer J.H. began the 15-minute special watch. When he looked into Cell # 1, Officer J.H. observed Pawlowski's feet, but could not tell if Pawlowski was sitting or what he was doing inside of the cell. Officer J.H. entered Pawlowski's cell and observed Pawlowski hanging from a sheet that was tied to the top of the gate with the other end of the sheet tied around Pawlowski's neck. Officer J.H. immediately radioed for assistance and grabbed Pawlowski underneath the arms to relieve the pressure from Pawlowski's neck. Incarcerated Individual (II) [REDACTED] that was housed on the same unit as Pawlowski, assisted Officer J.H. by trying to untie the knot in the sheet but he was unable to untie the sheet. At that time, the other officers arrived at the scene and were able to cut Pawlowski down. They initiate Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) was notified. The Automated External Defibrillator (AED) was applied but no shock advised. CPR was continued without interruption by the staff until EMS arrived. EMS arrived at the scene at 11:23 a.m. and assumed the care of Pawlowski. [REDACTED].
18. [REDACTED].
19. On 6/19/21, the facility video recording of B-Wing Housing Unit 107-day room area, showed Pawlowski unceasingly walking out of his cell and throughout the day room, and returning to his cell from 10:00 a.m., through 11:02 a.m. The last video recording of Pawlowski was at 11:01 a.m. when he exited his cell and walked throughout the day area. Pawlowski returned to his cell at 11:02 a.m.
20. Pawlowski wrote a suicide note to his wife and children that was retrieved from Pawlowski's cell by security staff after the terminal event. In summary, the note indicated that Pawlowski was distraught over his past actions towards his wife.
21. II [REDACTED] wrote a statement saying that he was housed on the same unit with Pawlowski and that they had talked to each other about their cases. II [REDACTED] documented that Pawlowski had made a statement once that he would rather die than be sentenced. II [REDACTED] documented that he knew Pawlowski was bummed out, but he never thought Pawlowski was suicidal. II [REDACTED] documented that on the morning of 6/19/21, the officer

did rounds on the unit around 11:00 a.m. and Pawlowski asked the officer for Ibuprofen and Tums. II [REDACTED] documented that around 11:03 a.m., he went to grab the Kiosk (in the day room) and heard Pawlowski make a noise in his cell that sounded like he was “hacking a loogie from his throat”. II [REDACTED] glanced over at Pawlowski and believed that he saw Pawlowski sitting on the toilet, so he looked away and minded his own business. During an interview with Commission staff, Officer P.D. reported removing II [REDACTED] from the scene in the housing unit during the incident with Pawlowski and as they were walking to the recreation room, II [REDACTED] stated “I didn’t know, I didn’t know”. [REDACTED]

22. Pawlowski was scheduled to see Mental Health on 6/21/21.

ACTIONS REQUIRED:

This case be closed as a suicide.

WITNESS, HONORABLE THOMAS J. LOUGHREN, Commissioner, NYS Commission of Correction, Alfred E. Smith State Office Building, 80 South Swan Street, 12th Floor, in the City of Albany, New York 12210 on this 28th day of June, 2022.


Thomas J. Loughren
Commissioner & Chair
Medical Review Board

TJL:BB:jdb
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