

on crime spree



NYPD, LEFT; CHARLES ECKERT

Police say suspects **Christopher Ransom, left, and Jagger Freeman** had robbed other cellphone stores beginning October 2018.

carcerated. It's sad to think that if even just one of them was where they belong — behind bars — then there's a good chance this incident never would have happened and our detective would be alive today."

Prosecutors on Monday revealed for the first time that Ransom and Freeman are alleged to have committed previous similar robberies.

Both were charged with robbing a T-Mobile store on Feb. 8 in St. Albans, Queens. Ransom was also separately indicted in the robbery of three other cellphone stores, all on Rockaway Boulevard in

Queens, on Oct. 23 and Oct. 28 last year and Jan. 19, 2019.

But it was in the Feb. 12 attempted robbery of a cellphone store on 120th Street in Richmond Hill where tragedy struck.

Shortly after 6 p.m., Freeman looked through the store's windows and called Ransom, prosecutors said. Moments later, Ransom, wearing a dark hoodie over his head and a mask covering part of his face, entered the store, holding a fake black pistol, prosecutors said.

Ransom ordered two store employees to remove cash from the registers and iPhones

and cash from the backroom safes, prosecutors said. The employees took cash from the first safe and as they were emptying the second of iPhones, Ransom left and headed to the main part of the store, according to charging documents.

Simonsen and Gorman, in plain clothes working a few blocks away on an unrelated robbery pattern, heard a call over the police radio reporting a commercial armed robbery and responded to the scene along with other uniformed officers, according to NYPD Commissioner James O'Neill.

Ransom began to exit through the front door, pointing his fake gun at officers outside, who backtracked to take cover, court papers say. Within 11 seconds, police have said, police fired 42 rounds and Ransom, Simonsen and Gorman were shot.

Simonsen, a 19-year-veteran of the force who grew up in South Jamesport, was fatally shot in the torso, while Gorman was seriously wounded, shot in the leg.

Freeman, who ran from the scene the moment gunfire erupted, was arrested Feb. 17.

Ransom and Freeman are due back in court May 15.



JAMES CARBONE

AnnMarie Drago at state Supreme Court Justice Fernando Camacho's status conference on Monday.

SEEKING TO RECOUP BURKE PAY

Bellone signs bill to get salary, sues Spota

BY RICK BRAND

rick.brand@newsday.com

Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone signed legislation Monday to sue to recoup salary and benefits from convicted ex-Police Chief James Burke over the beating of a burglary suspect and the cover-up. He also directed a similar suit be filed against ex-District Attorney Thomas Spota and a top aide who have been indicted on related charges.

The bill, unanimously approved last week by the Suffolk Legislature, authorized suing Burke to recoup pay after his 2012 beating of burglary suspect Christopher Loeb. Lawmakers asked attorneys to use the "faithless servant doctrine," which permits an employer to withhold pay and benefits for a period when an employee acts disloyally or engages in misdeeds. Bellone on Monday asked the county attorney to sue Spota and his former anti-corruption prosecutor Christopher McPartland.

"Former DA Spota empowered and conspired with Jim Burke and Chris McPartland," said Jason Elan, a Bellone spokesman, in a statement. "... any legal action to recoup taxpayer-funded salary and benefits should include each individual."

County Attorney Dennis Brown will solicit attorneys to represent Suffolk through a request for qualifications set to go out by week's end. Brown said he expects to get responses about three weeks after the request is sent. Spota and McPartland were indicted in October 2017 on fed-

eral charges of being involved in the cover-up of Loeb's beating. Both have pleaded not guilty and are each free on \$500,000 bond.

Attorneys for Spota and McPartland did not immediately return calls for comment.

Bellone's directive comes after union officials raised concerns during debate on the bill that it would set a precedent, allowing the county to go after the pay of other county employees. Because of those concerns, GOP sponsor Legis. Robert Trotta of Fort Salonga amended his bill to make clear the resolution was "strictly limited" to Burke. Brown said the bill doesn't preclude legal action against others.

"The resolution . . . does not limit the ability of the County Executive to pursue additional legal action," he said Monday.

Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory (D-Copiague) said suing Spota and McPartland may be "premature" before trial.

"We sent the message with our resolution that we will not tolerate corruption and intend to protect the taxpayers," Gregory said. "But it doesn't seem to be an apples-to-apples situation. . . . They might want to keep their powder dry until after trial."

Brown said the timing of a lawsuit against Spota and McPartland "would have to be evaluated by an outside counsel. It's more of a strategic decision more than anything else."

Trotta on Monday said Bellone "may be learning his job. He could have done this with Burke without legislative action but never did."