

Police Review Earlier Ruling On Cause of 'Marsha's' Death

After steady community pressure, police last week said they would submit new evidence to the medical examiner that could change the official description of Marsha Johnson's death from suicide to "unknown."

Johnson, a transvestite who helped lead the Stonewall rebellion for gay and lesbian rights nearly 25 years ago, was found dead in the Hudson River during the summer. The cause of death was listed by the medical examiner as suicide, although many questions remained.

But last week, police met with Johnson's family and friends, Councilmember Tom Duane and others and agreed to submit new evidence to the examiner.

"Police presented to us the facts that they had," said Matt Foreman, executive director of

the Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project, "and then we attempted, I think fairly successfully, to go through the facts and indicate that they did not prove what they thought they proved."

Among evidence that police said points to suicide was the fact that Johnson, also known as Malcolm Michaels, was found to be carrying his birth certificate. Johnson, police said, had given away flowers and some clothing the week before he died.

But at the meeting in Manhattan South headquarters on Tuesday the police were told that Johnson had always carried a birth certificate for identification and that he routinely gave away flowers to friends and relatives.