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**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER  
BOARD OF MEDICOLEGAL INVESTIGATIONS**

**BOARD OF MEDICOLEGAL INVESTIGATIONS  
REGULAR MEETING**

Board Meeting Minutes from  
Thursday April 1, 2021 at 2:00 p.m.  
921 NE 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73105  
and Via Videoconference

*In conformity with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act, advance notice of this meeting was transmitted to the Oklahoma Secretary of State on November 17, 2020 at 2:03 P.M. and public notice of this meeting, together with the agenda, was posted in prominent public view on the front door of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, 921 NE 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Oklahoma City, .*

Members present: Mr. Ricky Adams, Mr. Rocky McElvany, Mr. Chris Ferguson, and Dr. Eric Pfeifer.

Members present via videoconference: Dr. Robert Allen, Mr. Glen Huff, Dr. Eric Harp, Dr. Roy Zhang, and Dr. Doug Stewart.

Members absent: None

Others Present: Dr. Joshua Lanter (OCME), John Crittenden (OAG), Kari Learned (OCME), Lori Shively (OCME), Dr. Jesse Kemp, (OCME), Dr. Marc Harrison (OCME), and Tyler Stiles (Oklahoma Funeral Board).

Mr. Adams called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. Roll was called and a quorum was established.

Dr. Allen motioned to adopt the minutes as amended from March 4, 2021 meeting. Dr. Stewart seconded the motion. Roll was called and all were in favor.

Mr. Adams announced that he has asked Dr. Pfeifer to provide updates in a briefing packet to the Board for all meetings.

- Update from the Chief Medical Examiner, Dr. Eric Pfeifer

Financial snapshot –

~ Dr. Pfeifer announced that the agency is still in very good financial standing.

Legislative update –

~ SB95 is being heard today. This bill requires the agency to provide to the Child Death Review Board a completed sudden unexplained infant death investigation (SUIDI) form. Dr. Pfeifer expects this bill to pass. Dr. Pfeifer has conveyed to the Legislators the fiscal impact on the agency and received 2 full-time investigators were added to the staff. This is at a cost of approximately \$170K annually for both investigators.

SB354 would authorize out of state transport of dead bodies without a permit. The bill passed out of Committee and Senate and appears to be gaining momentum. The language has changed some to where it is less worrisome for Dr. Pfeifer, however, he still has concerns. Dr. Pfeifer said it may be time for he and Dr. Lanter to go to the Capitol before this bill goes through the House to speak with them and possibly the Governor. Mr. Ferguson asked Dr. Pfeifer to let him know if they need help. He went on to say, there are a couple Representative he knows on the Committee that could be helpful, however, the agency must communicate with them. Mr. Ferguson also mentioned that the District Attorneys Council may be helpful as well.

~ Plans for next year are underway to increase salary for toxicology, investigations and technical staff.

~ We will be in discussions with the State Department of Health (OSDH) regarding assuming the certification of death certificates (DC) on non-jurisdiction cases. This is potentially over 1000 cases per year. Dr. Pfeifer estimates this could potentially be \$200-\$300K per year in additional manpower. Dr. Pfeifer explained that these are cases where, for whatever reason, the physician refuses to sign a DC on their patients. These end up with no one wanting to sign the DC, even though the decedent died of natural causes. This leaves the family waiting on a signed DC and could potentially take months for a resolution. Ultimately, they come back to our agency. This is becoming a more serious issue, consuming manpower hours. Mr. McElvany added; the OSDH will contact the Medical Licensure Board and ask them to intervene on the part of the physician. When the physician chooses not to sign the DC, the family is left without assistance.

Mr. Adams asked Dr. Pfeifer for a brief written report from each department (toxicology, investigations, technical staff, etc.) providing updates and general information from these areas. He would like to see this in a packet with the financials so they can be reviewed altogether.

Administrative restructuring –

~ Dr. Pfeifer provided a brief history of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) position. In 2011 the positions of Public Information Officer (PIO) and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) were consolidated with the CAO position. This change saved the agency approximately \$175K per year and was popular with the Legislature at the time. Since then, we have eliminated the CAO position and the functions have been reassigned to four employees. Financials, purchasing, budget and legislative liaison going to Renee Steward who is our Procurement Officer. Lori Shively is doing all the human resources responsibilities and policy management. Legal, PIO and media correspondence are going to Kari Learned, with Dr. Pfeifer addressing some media requests.

Mr. Ferguson asked if these responsibilities would come with some type of pay increase. Dr. Pfeifer acknowledged that they will, and his intent is to give modest pay increases to all three of the administrative staff that overtake these duties. The elimination of the CAO position will more than cover the increases. He is also looking at giving lesser paid admin staff a slight increase as well.

Priority projects –

~ The Tulsa building should be complete in March or April of next year with occupancy by summer or fall.

~ When the Tulsa building is complete, the agency will concentrate on the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) checklist items.

~ Cremation and out of state transport permit turnaround time was much improved in March; with an average of 8 hours & 3 minutes.

~ Dr. Pfeifer would also like to see the agency transition to operating paperless in a few years. He's not sure the agency has support from IT service to accomplish this project. This will go on the backburner for now.

Mr. McElvany told Dr. Pfeifer, when the agency is ready to go paperless, he will provide information on the company the State Health Department used when having old records scanned. Dr. Pfeifer said the agency's old case files have been scanned. What we are looking at is eliminating forms used and maintaining everything within our cases database.

Mr. Huff asked about the recent audit performed on the agency by the Oklahoma State Auditor & Inspector. Dr. Pfeifer responded that he's not heard anything regarding the audit. Mr. Adams added he's not received any feedback as well.

● Update from the Deputy Chief Medical Examiner, Dr. Josh Lanter

~ Dr. Lanter advised the new Tulsa office is still set for completion in March/April 2022. The progress at this point is with wall placement, duct work, plumbing and piping. This is requiring more of Dr. Lanter and other staff's time. Currently there are no issues with purchasing or placement of equipment.

Mr. Adams asked how much lead time is required if someone want to come for a tour. Dr. Lanter responded that the construction company is very accommodating and will provide access. Anytime within the next couple of weeks would be ideal.

Mr. Adams recapped that he would like to have an update with the financial information (revenue status report) provided to the Board prior to each meeting.

Mr. McElvany motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Huff seconded the motion. Roll was call and were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 2:22 pm.