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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 August 4, 2022, at 2:00 p.m.
921 NE 23rd Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73105
and Via Videoconference at 1627 Southwest Blvd, Tulsa, OK 74107

In conformity with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act, advance notice of this meeting was transmitted to the Oklahoma Secretary of State on December 3, 2021, at 12:45 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 23rd Street, Oklahoma City, OK.

Members present: Mr. Ricky Adams, Mr. Robert Hoisington, Mr. Tyler Stiles, Dr. Michael Magguilli, Mr. Keith Reed and Dr. Eric Pfeifer.

Members present via videoconference: Dr. Eric Harp, and Dr. Robert Allen.

Members absent: Dr. Doug Stewart

Others Present: Madalynn Martin (OAG), Kari Learned (OCME), Dr. Marc Harrison (OCME), Tricia Everest (Cabinet Secretary), and Dr. Josh Lanter (OCME) Via videoconference.

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

Mr. Stiles motioned to adopt the minutes as written from the May 5, 2022, meeting. Dr. Harp seconded the motion. Roll was called, Mr. Reed abstained, and all others were in favor.

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

~ Dr. Pfeifer presented an overview of agency operations to the Board.

The new Tulsa building is now in operation. We had a wonderful ribbon cutting ceremony on the 28th of July 28th.

Mr. Adams mentioned that some Board members were able to attend the ribbon cutting. It was a nice ceremony and a beautiful facility.

Dr. Pfeifer continued with the top concern being NAME (National Association of Medical Examiners) reaccreditation. Now that the Tulsa office is operational, the agency needs to get our staff levels up and begin checking items off the NAME list to regain accreditation. We are hopeful this can be accomplished in the next year.

The caseload data trend is still concerning. The caseload rose at the same shape as the curve for COVID-19 infections. COVID-19 infections have gone down, however, our caseload has remained flat/high. We need to calculate the number of staff pathologists needed as prescribed by NAME which factors 250 autopsy equivalents per pathologist per year to gain accreditation. We'll work on this in the next few weeks to see how many extra staff we need to request for next year, if any. During COVID-19 our caseload increased by approximately 25%. This historically represents 2 decades of growth for this agency.

Open cases greater than 90 days old –

There are approximately 400 open autopsy cases over 90 days old. An additional 320 external exam cases over 90 days old are open as well. This represents less than 10% of our workload.

Mr. Adams asked if there is any particular type of case that has been on the rise. Dr. Pfeifer answered it's been all types of cases.

Due their complexity, anthropology cases take a tremendous amount of time to complete, and these cases remain steady. We have been funded this year for a third anthropologist and are currently looking for someone to join the team.

We estimate that the agency needs 16 full time forensic pathologists and 2 fellows: for a total of 18 for NAME reaccreditation. We currently have 2 open slots. There is potential to extend offers to the current fellows; pending a few more months of observation.

One Tulsa staff physician has announced retirement.

Fellowship –

Two new fellows joined us July 1st of this year. They are currently in their radiology rotation getting experience in radiography and how to use the CT scanner. The agency received notice from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) notifying us of our continued accreditation status for 2 fellows. At this time, we have one fellow scheduled for next academic year. This leaves us with one open slot which we continue to try and fill.

Administration –

Salary adjustments were given to all administrative staff.

State agencies, including OCME are transitioning to WorkDay which is a new system for payroll and Human Resources data entry.

The agency's budget workbook is complete.

Anthropology –

With the completion of the Tulsa office, both anthropologists now have the necessary equipment and space to conduct their exams and perform their tasks.

The anthropologists were also given a salary adjustment and we have approval to for an FTE increase for an additional anthropologist.

Investigations –

Scene response time average for the month of July was 1 hour 25 minutes. The only way to reduce this time is to add more staff.

Salary adjustments for investigators commenced July 2022. We were approved for 4 additional investigators and recruitment is underway. We would like to add 6 more district investigators next year.

Permit turnaround time –

Permit turnaround time has decreased slightly to 11 hours 48 minutes. The goal is to have permits issued in 2 business days or less.

Toxicology lab –

The agency has hired our 3rd forensic toxicologist who will begin in September. She is a fully trained forensic toxicologist who comes to us from the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration).

Two new GC (gas chromatograph) instruments and an LCMS (liquid chromatograph mass spectrometry) have been installed in the toxicology laboratory.

Salary adjustments for the toxicologist and forensic chemist commenced July 2022.

Legislation –

Dr. Pfeifer has not seen any interim studies that directly affect the OCME this year.

Priority projects –

Re-accreditation by NAME remains our #1 priority. Now that the agency has the buildings we are working on the needed staff. At this point the focus is on the NAME checklist and to complete a couple of required policies.

Financial snapshot –

The \$500K monthly payment for the Tulsa building construction has ended, correspondingly that has dropped off our appropriations. The agency still has a robust amount of available cash.

Dr. Allen asked Dr. Pfeifer if there is pressure placed on the medical examiner's office from the state legislators to obtain NAME accreditation. Dr. Pfeifer replied, yes and no. Occasionally we have attorneys inquire why the medical examiner's office does not have accreditation. They question if the work product does not qualify under Oklahoma law due to the lack of accreditation. We've argued this is

the practice of forensic pathology, a medical endeavor and not a laboratory science in the way the OCME toxicology lab would be. The OCME toxicology laboratory is accredited and has maintained their accreditation throughout by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology (ABFT). Dr. Pfeifer has not felt any pressure from the legislature in the last couple of years on this subject.

Mr. Adams asked Dr. Pfeifer if the \$10.8M carryover will this be rolled over to the next year? Dr. Pfeifer said there are a few things that still need to be purchased. Digital retina cameras and an x-ray system for both offices and a couple of other items. We will have a sizeable amount left over and may not need to ask for much of an appropriations increase. However, this is a large agency now and is not inexpensive in terms of salaries and equipment. Mr. Hoisington asked if the carryover could be used for salaries and Dr. Pfeifer replied yes it can.

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

Dr. Lanter advised the new Tulsa office is up and running. Over the next couple of months, the primary focus is to continue the moving process. Last Friday they were able to perform exams on 23 individuals and had 4 physicians working at the same time. This is the first time that has ever happened for Tulsa.

There are still a few mechanical and technology issues they are still trying to iron out.

The ribbon cutting ceremony went very well and was a great experience. The tours given were very much appreciated and respectful of what our agency does. The participants were impressed. If anyone would like a tour, they can contact Dr. Lanter, and he will be happy to show them around the new facility.

Dr. Lanter thanked Dr. Pfeifer and the Board for their support. Without it, we would not have the new building. The old building is scheduled to be demolished in September.

- New business.

Mr. Adams announced his retirement from the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigations and today would be the last OCME Board meeting he would attend. Collectively, the Board thanked Mr. Adams for his service and his contribution to the agency.

Dr. Allen motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Reed seconded the motion. Roll was called and were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 2:32 pm.