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

**BOARD OF MEDICOLEGAL INVESTIGATIONS
SPECIAL MEETING**

Board Meeting Minutes from
Thursday March 4, 2021 at 2:00 p.m.
921 NE 23rd 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 February 28, 2021 at 4:53 PM 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, .

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

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

Members absent: None

Others Present: Dr. Joshua Lanter (OCME), John Crittenden (OAG), Kari Learned (OCME), Lori Shively (OCME), Renee Steward, (OCME), Dr. Marc Harrison (OCME, 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. Stewart motioned to adopt the minutes as written from February 17, 2021, meeting. Dr. Allen seconded the motion. Roll was called and all were in favor.

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

Financial snapshot –

~ Dr. Pfeifer announced that the current available case is \$10.039M. He also provided historical appropriation data for the past 10 years.

Legislative update –

~ The Governor's budget summary includes the \$1.5M increase we requested. Once the new Tulsa office is paid for, we will be \$6M in the black. The vast majority of these funds will most likely be given back to the legislature. Hopefully we're able keep some for salary adjustments.

~ Dr. Pfeifer is still looking at SB 354 which addresses out of state transports. This bill passed the Senate yesterday and is headed to the House. The bill calls to eliminate out of state transport permits for all counties. For us, this means no investigation has been performed on a decedent and a permit is not issued. Additionally, there is a financial impact. The loss of revenue is estimated at about \$249K a year for the agency.

Mr. Adams said he spoke with his legislative liaison at OSBI and asked Dr. Pfeifer if he has spoken with anyone at the Capitol. Dr. Pfeifer hasn't spoken with anyone at this point and reassured Mr. Adams he will.

Priority project –

~ National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) reaccreditation is our primary goal. The Tulsa building will need to be completed and occupied. Additionally, performance data needs to be compiled for the accreditation team when they visit OCME to perform their inspection.

Performance Data (Permits and cases greater than 90 days old) -

~ Two weeks ago, the total cases greater than 90 days old was 393. When dividing this by the number of cases we did last year, it totals 4.6%. Dr. Pfeifer is not concerned by this number and feels we should be back on track by July.

~ In 2020, the average turnaround time for permits was 8.6 hours for 15,000 permits. In the past, the average was approximately 6 days. With the implementation of an electronic system, we have eliminated receiving the applications by fax and manually entering information into the database. Our goal has always been a turnaround time of 48 hours; we continually stay well below that timeframe.

December 2020, we invoiced over \$500K in permit fees. This is almost 2 ½ times more than what we worked 10 years ago. In response to this increase, we have hired 2 part time employees. Additionally, the Tulsa and Oklahoma City investigative supervisors utilize investigators to assist with permits during their downtime. The turnaround time increased in February to about 16 hours. Dr. Pfeifer said we are still well under the 48-hour goal.

Mr. Ferguson agreed with Dr. Pfeifer in that cremation permits are on the rise. He added that he has reached out to us when funeral homes have contacted the Funeral Board office regarding permits. He added the issues were addressed very quickly and expressed his appreciation for the immediate attention that was given by the permit staff.

Mr. Ferguson asked Dr. Pfeifer if he thinks the case turnaround time will continue to decrease before reaccreditation. Dr. Pfeifer said the turnaround time must go down for reaccreditation. Mr. Ferguson asked about the breakdown by doctor and asked if there is a specific reason why some doctors have many open cases while others have only a few. Dr. Pfeifer said the doctors with the most open cases are mainly our fellows, which is expected. He added that in the beginning of the fellowship, they are in the autopsy lab all the time. Starting this month, they are working on specific rotations and beginning their sign out phase.

Mr. McElvany asked about the cases that do not have a doctor assigned to the case. Dr. Pfeifer explained those cases are almost all anthropology case. Once the anthropologists finish their evaluation of a case, it will be assigned to a doctor.

Dr. Allen asked the process for identifying remains which have been in the possession of the Medical Examiner for a long time. Dr. Pfeifer said that almost all the anthropology cases represent skeletal remains. In the past, we've used the University of North Texas, but due to lack of funding that has been suspended. However, we anticipate the funding to be restored at some point soon.

Dr. Stewart asked for an update regarding turn over of staff, specifically investigators and physicians. Dr. Pfeifer acknowledged there will always be a small amount of turn over but he is not a concern at this point. Looking at regional and national data, we will probably need to adjust the salaries of the investigators in the future.

- Update from the Deputy Chief Medical Examiner, Dr. Josh Lanter
~ Dr. Lanter advised the progress of the new Tulsa office has been delayed by a couple of weeks. We still anticipate the end of March or early April 2022 as the end of construction date. The construction company is currently trying to adjust the schedule and get back to the mid-March time frame. Dr. Lanter toured the facility last week. They are currently working on the underfloor ducting and plumbing. He also inquired about a possible tour within the next 4-6 weeks and they were very accommodating to his request. Dr. Lanter then invited the Board members to contact him if they are interested in taking a tour. At this time, he had nothing else to report.

Dr. Allen asked if Dr. Lanter knew when the building would have the exterior finished. Dr. Lanter said they are currently installing windows on the west side of the building and thinks they should start that within the next week or two.

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