

CENTRAL OFFICE  
901 N. Stonewall  
Oklahoma City, OK 73117  
Tel: (405) 239-7141  
Fax: (405) 239-2430



EASTERN OFFICE  
1115 West 17<sup>th</sup> St.  
Tulsa, OK 74107  
Tel: (918) 295-3400  
Fax: (918) 585-1549

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

**BOARD OF MEDICOLEGAL INVESTIGATIONS  
REGULAR MEETING**

Board Meeting Minutes from  
Thursday, November 3, 2016 at 2:00 p.m.  
Location Office of the Chief Medical Examiner  
901 N. Stonewall, Oklahoma City, OK 73117, 405-239-7141 and  
Via Videoconference at 1115 W. 17<sup>th</sup> St., Tulsa, OK 74117, 918-582-0985

*In conformity with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act, advance notice of this meeting was transmitted to the Oklahoma Secretary of State on November 18, 2015, at 2:57 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, 901 N. Stonewall, Oklahoma City, OK and on the front door of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner Eastern Division, 1115 W. 17<sup>th</sup>, Tulsa.*

Members present: Mr. Charlie Curtis, Mr. Chris Ferguson, Mr. Glen Huff, Dr. Roy Zhang and Dr. Eric Pfeifer

Members present via videoconference: Dr. Robert Allen and Dr. Douglas Stewart

Members absent: Mr. Rocky McElvany, Dr. Steve Vogel

Others Present: Amy Elliott (OCME), Kari Learned (OCME), Mary Wilson (OCME), Dr. Joshua Lanter (OCME), Lori Shively (OCME), Dr. Marc Harrison (OCME), Dr. Byron Curtis (OCME), Jeremy Benavides (OCME), Tiffany Wythe (OAG) and Cynthia Santos (eCapitol).

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

Mr. Ferguson motioned to adopt the minutes from the August 4, 2016 meeting. Dr. Zhang seconded the motion. Roll was called, and all were in favor.

Mr. Huff motioned to adopt the minutes from the October 10, 2016 meeting. Mr. Ferguson seconded the motion. Roll was called, and all were in favor.

Update from Chief Medical Examiner – Eric Pfeifer, M.D.

● Financial snapshot –

~ There was an approximate carryover of \$104K which is a little higher than previous months. This is the result of our budget being somewhat restored. However, this is still not enough to pay for a new building.

- Priority projects –

~ In order to regain National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) accredited by the end of 2018, the Oklahoma City practice needs to be finished and Tulsa practice must be brought up to the same standard. Additionally, we must have the appropriate number of staff to meet the caseload requirements for NAME.

~ The new practice for Oklahoma City seems to be moving along very well. Demolition is set to begin in less than 2 weeks. The design development drawings are finished. The demolition documents and the construction documents are in the process of being drawn up. Everyone thinks the entire project can be accomplished and occupancy can be achieved next October.

Based on the preliminary architecture study done in conjunction with our Tulsa office and OMES we have formally submitted a one-time appropriation of \$9M in our budget request to effect that renovation. This will bring the Tulsa practice up to the same standard as the new Oklahoma City practice.

Mr. Ferguson asked if the \$9M would be for the morgue or staff. Dr. Pfeifer advised the funds would not be for staff but will be designated for infrastructure such as the autopsy lab, new cooler, expanded space and ventilation. The extension would be to the north toward the parking lot and the downstairs area will be expanded by about 4,000-5,000 sq. ft.

Mr. Curtis asked if we are requesting the \$9M in a special appropriation or as an emergency. Mrs. Elliott advised it is being request through the normal budget program request through the agency business services. If we are not awarded the funds this way, we will ask for emergency appropriations in February. Mrs. Elliott added that we are also on the Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES) capital improvements list, also this is a priority project for the Capitol long range planning commission. Governor Fallin and Preston Doerflinger are both aware of what the cost will be for this project. Mr. Curtis asked if there is a contingency plan or has a bond had been discussed to raise the funding if the one time funding falls through. Dr. Pfeifer is not aware of any other plans. Mrs. Elliott added that they have met with House fiscal analysts and received advice from them. We are developing a packet of information to distribute to the legislators. Mr. Curtis suggested a letter of support for the additional funding for the Tulsa practice be signed by the Board and added to the packet. Dr. Pfeifer added, a budget to sustain NAME accreditation will be approximately \$14.5M per year. This has been discussed at every budget and performance hearing as well as every meeting with a House or Senate or member as well as the Governor.

~The new Administrative Rules became effective on the 1<sup>st</sup> of this month. With this, we anticipate our fee increases will bring in an extra \$850K per year. This is earmarked for 6 additional in-house investigators and 2 more forensic pathologists. This will get us very close to what we need for staffing.

~ Permit turnaround time (TAT) has gone from approximately 3-4 days, 4 to 5 years ago, to an average of 10 hours and 12 minutes. Mr. Ferguson added, he is hearing the same thing from funeral industry that are very thankful for the online system and the faster TAT.

•Open cases update –

~The number of open autopsies is at a historic low. In March of 2014, approximately 650 autopsy cases were open. Currently we have 425 open autopsies, of which, 46 are over 90 days old. Mr. Ferguson added that in 2009, an average of 1482 autopsy cases were open. He went on to thank Dr. Pfeifer and the staff for the work being done and the improvement in the open case TAT.

Dr. Pfeifer concluded by letting the Board know one of our Anthropologists, Angela Berg brought to his attention the National Institute of Justice/Department of Justice (NIJ/DOJ) grant with the University of North Texas is not being renewed for DNA testing of human remains. This was a nation-wide loss of a \$4.7M grant. The program has assisted with identifying the skeletal remains of 56 decedents for our Agency. This is a big loss for our Agency and we will look at possibilities for keeping DNA identification sustained.

Update from Chief Administrative Officer – Amy Elliott

● Staff update –

~ The new investigative co-supervisor system is working as planned. Dale Gross and Jeremy Benavides work very well together. We hired Brock Smith to replace investigator Lacy Wood who left us to attend nursing school. We also hired Tai Christenson to fill the position Jeremy vacated.

~ The last step in the automated permit system has hit a road block. We would like permits to be emailed as soon as the doctor electronically signs them, however, when the email is received by a funeral home it will show the doctor as the sender of the email. We want the email address to read from the permit department. OMES has not been able to accomplish this.

~ We are working on changing our database to be web based. This would allow the district investigators full functionality just as the office personnel have.

~ FileTrail has been expanded to the Tulsa office and we are currently working on getting them up and running.

● Administrative rules update –

~ The new Administrative rules went into effect on Tuesday, November 1<sup>st</sup>. We received Cabinet Secretary Thompson's approval to hire the forensic pathologists, investigators and pathology technicians. Once the additional investigators are on-board, we will eliminate body storage fees of \$250K a year and \$35K per year on the answering service.

Update from Deputy Chief Medical Examiner – Joshua Lanter, M.D

● Tulsa office update

~ We have hired a part time pathology technician to work on the weekends to assist with the increasing case load. We have posted for 2 additional part time pathology technicians to assist in release and acceptance of bodies. We have a new district 6 investigator starting on November 16. This leaves 2 openings in district 6 which Dale is currently working on filling. Lisa Lashley transferred from the receptionist position to an opening in permits. Jackie Ridenour is our new receptionist.

The Board discussed 2017 meeting dates for the Board of Medicolegal Investigations, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME). It was decided to meet monthly during the legislative session and quarterly the remainder of the year. The dates are as follows: February 2, March 2, April 6, May 4, August 3 and November 2. Additionally, the August 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting will be held in Tulsa.

Mr. Huff motioned to accept the 2017 OCME Board meeting dates. Mr. Ferguson seconded the motion, roll was called and all were in favor.

No new business.

Mr. Huff motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Ferguson seconded the motion and all were in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:36 pm.