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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, November 1, 2018 at 2:00 p.m.  
921 NE 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73105  
405-239-7141  
And via videoconference at  
1115 W. 17<sup>th</sup> St., Tulsa, OK 74107  
918-295-3400

*In conformity with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act, advance notice of this meeting was transmitted to the Oklahoma Secretary of State on December 8, 2017 at 11:51 AM 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, 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. Glen Huff, Mr. Rocky McElvany, Ms. Andrea Fielding for Mr. Rick Adams, Dr. Roy Zhang and Dr. Steve Vogel.

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

Members absent: Mr. Chris Ferguson and Dr. Eric Pfeifer

Others Present: Amy Elliott (OCME) Kari Learned (OCME) Dr. Ross Miller (OCME), Dr. Byron Curtis (OCME) Lori Shively () and Marc S. Pate (OAG). Via video conference, Mary Wilson (OCME), Dr. Josh Lanter (OCME) and Samantha Richardson (OCME).

Mr. Huff 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 written from the August 2, 2018, meeting. Dr. Stewart seconded the motion. Roll was called, Ms. Fielding and Dr. Vogel abstained, all others were in favor.

Dr. Zhang joined the meeting at 2:04 P.M.

## Update from Chief Administrative Officer – Mrs. Amy Elliott

- Financial update–

- ~ The agency had a good month of permit revenue and currently we have a positive monthly carryover.
- ~ In 2 weeks, the Oklahoma City office will have occupied the new building 1 year. We continue to meet weekly to discuss unfinished projects and items to be repaired. We have spent a significant amount of money this last month implementing warranties. This was a big financial expense for the agency.

- Update on priority project–

- ~ The priority projects remain the same, which is getting a new facility for our Tulsa practice and to regain National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) accreditation.

- Staff update –

- ~ Dr. Van Pelt resigned effective November 30, 2018. Memphis, TN offered her \$50,000.00 over what we can pay. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> physician to leave the agency in 2 years.
- ~ Kari Learned was promoted to division manager of administration in the Oklahoma City Office effective September 18, 2018.

- Emergency Funding Request –

- ~ The agency has been watching forensic pathology physician salaries, nationally over the last few years. After losing 5 doctors, who have not been replaced, it has recently become an emergency situation. Due to the number of cases being assigned to our doctors, we will not be able to meet the NAME requirements for autopsies/cases per physician. Mrs. Elliott requested an emergency meeting with Representative Kevin Wallace and Senator Roger Thompson, who are the respective Chair Appropriations. Dr. Pfeifer and Mrs. Elliott met with Rep. Wallace's designee and Sen. Thompson and their budget analysts on October 25, 2018. Mrs. Elliott provided Rep. Wallace's designee and Sen. Thompson copies of a survey from Hennepin County, MN which identified a national shortage of forensic pathologists (FP). According to the study, the nation has a shortage of at least 1000 FPs. Rep. Wallace's designee and Sen. Thompson were also provided a list requirements for the agency to regain NAME accreditation. (Mrs. Elliott provided the Board with copies of the survey along with various FP job postings from around the county). After meeting with Rep. Wallace Sunday, October 28, 2019, to discuss our situation, Sen. Thompson then toured the Tulsa OCME office Monday, October 29<sup>th</sup> with Mrs. Elliott and Dr. Lanter. Sen. Thompson advised during the tour that he saw no problem funding the physician's salaries. He also expressed the need for a new OCME office in Tulsa.

Effective November 1<sup>st</sup>, our physician's annual salaries were increased from \$225K to \$250K. The Deputy Chief Medical Examiner was given a larger increase due to his position and responsibilities. These salary increases will be taken from the \$5M which has been set aside for the new Tulsa office. The Legislators who are responsible for appropriations indicated to Mrs. Elliott that they will reimburse those monies. If for some reason they can't, the money will be used from carryover. Without additional funding, the pay increases could be sustained for 3 years at this level. The agency cannot run without forensic pathologists, causing this situation to become a priority. Dr. Pfeifer and Mrs. Elliott checked with OCME Board Chairman Huff, who was supportive of the plan. Dr. Pfeifer feels this increase will keep us competitive for about 2-3 year, then the subject will need to be revisited.

Mrs. Elliott added, a cost of living increase for our forensic pathologists has been added to the budget which would provide an increase to their salaries every other year. The physician salary increases will cost the agency \$651K annually. A budget request has been made for this amount which will be put back into the account for the new Tulsa office. Mrs. Elliott also stated, that in order to meet NAME accreditation, we must have an additional fellow and 2 additional full time FPs. One for Oklahoma City and one for Tulsa. We will also need an additional \$1.6M to meet minimum NAME standards.

Dr. Allen asked if the new salaries will keep us competitive with physicians coming into the field looking for their first job. Mrs. Elliott said this will make us very competitive.

Dr. Stewart added that as a Board member, he gives his support to what is being done in order to keep and recruit a talented group of people. He also felt the Board should give their support and endorsement as well. Dr. Allen suggested, as a Board, writing a letter to Rep. Wallace and Sen. Thompson to vocalize support for the OCME. Also let them know, for the stated reasons above, we desperately need their support and would appreciate them sharing this information with other members of their respective groups at the capitol. As Chairman, Mr. Huff will write a letter on behalf of the OCME Board. It will be sent to the appropriate legislative bodies declaring unanimous support of the Board

Dr. Stewart motioned for the Board to endorse the emergency funding request to adjust the physician salaries. Ms. Fielding seconded the motion, roll was called and all were in favor.

- 2019 Budget –

~ Mrs. Elliott submitted the 2019 budget request with Dr. Pfeifer's approval. The requests are as follows:

- A one-time \$12.8M appropriation for the new OCME Tulsa office.
- The physician salary increases to continue.
- 5% pay increase for the remaining agency staff at a cost of \$494K annually.
- Appropriations for 2 additional forensic pathologists with salary and benefits to move toward NAME reaccreditation.

- Annual report –

Mrs. Learned advised the Board that the agency has dedicated an employee to this project. This staff member is diligently working to bring the OCME annual reports up to date. We have not been able to get the figures to balance due to some database issues. Currently, our database vendor is working on a fix for this. We anticipate having all reports, through 2017 completed and posted on our website by the end of the year.

Update from Deputy Chief Medical Examiner –

- Tulsa office update –

~ Dr. Lanter introduced the new Eastern Division Investigative Supervisor, Samantha (Sami) Richardson. Mrs. Richardson started with the agency in Oklahoma City as an investigative assistant in permits. She later became an investigator then promoted into the supervisor position. Within the last month and a half Mrs. Richardson has interviewed for our last 2 open district positions. Both positions have been filled.

Dr. Lanter added that no additional meetings have been held regarding the new Tulsa office since our last Board meeting. Mrs. Elliott added that Eric Pollock with Oklahoma State University (OSU) said they will have floor plans with the OCME directives by the end of this week.

- 2019 OCME Board Meeting dates –

~The Board discussed 2019 meeting dates for the Board of Medicolegal Investigations, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. It was decided to meet monthly during the legislative session and quarterly the remainder of the year.

Dr. Stewart motioned to adopt the following as meeting dates 2019 Board of Medicolegal Investigations, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. February 7, March 7, April 4, May 2, August 1 and November 7, with the April 4 meeting originating in Tulsa. Mr. McElvany seconded the motion, roll was called and all were in favor.

Mr. McElvany motioned to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing the employment, hiring, appointment, promotion, demotion, disciplining, or resignation of the Chief Medical Examiner. Dr. Vogel seconded the motion, roll was called and all were in favor.

The videoconference with the Tulsa office was disconnected at this time.

The videoconference was re-established.

Mr. McElvany motioned to exit Executive Session. Dr. Zhang seconded the motion, roll was called. Dr. Stewart was no longer in attendance, all were in favor.

Mr. McElvany motioned to increase Dr. Pfeifer's annual salary to \$320K. Dr. Zhang seconded the motion, roll was called and all were in favor.

- No new business.

Dr. Allen motioned to adjourn the meeting, Dr. Vogel seconded the motion. Roll was called, all were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 3:04 pm.