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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 2, 2023, at 2:00 p.m.
1627 Southwest Blvd., Tulsa, OK 74117, 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 November 9, 2022, at 4:26 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 and 1627 Southwest Blvd., Tulsa, OK 74117.

Members present: Dr. Jason Beaman, Ms. Andrea Fielding, Dr. Eric Harp, Dr. Michael Magguilli, Mr. Tyler Stiles and Dr. Eric Pfeifer.

Members absent: Ms. Angela Marsee, Mr. Keith Reed and Dr. Doug Stewart.

Others Present: Dr. Josh Lanter (OCME), Madalynn Martin (OAG), Kari Learned (OCME), Elysa Imhoff (OCME), Lori Shively (OCME), and Michele Krizan (OCME)

Dr. Harp 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 August 3, 2023, meeting. Dr. Harp second the motion. Roll was called and all were in favor.

•2024 meeting dates for the Board of Medicolegal Investigations, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

Dr. Beaman motioned to accept February 1st, May 2nd, August 8th, November 7th as regular OCME Board Meeting dates for 2024. May & November meetings will be held in Tulsa. Mr. Stiles seconded the motion. Roll was called and all were in favor.

•Nomination, discussion, and possible election of the Board Chairman.

Dr. Harp opened the floor for discussion and nomination for Board Chairman. After some discussion, Mr. Stiles motioned to nominate Dr. Harp as Board Chairman. Dr. Beaman second the motion. Roll was called and all were in favor.

•Nomination, discussion, and possible election of the Board Vice Chairman.

Dr. Harp opened the floor for discussion and nomination for Board Vice Chairman. After some discussion, Dr. Harp motioned to nominate Mr. Stiles to serve as Vice Chairman. Dr. Magguilli seconded the motion. Roll was called and all were in favor.

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

~Dr. Pfeifer presented the agency update to the Board.

Dr. Pfeifer announced the overarching priority has been and continues to be National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) reaccreditation. Our strategic plan to move toward the goal of reaccreditation as not changed.

Since the Board last met, Dr. Doel resigned and accepted a position in Iowa. Starting in July 2024, 3 pathologists (this includes our current fellow) will join the Oklahoma City office. With this addition, the Oklahoma City office will be fully staffed.

Due to the severe shortage of forensic pathologists, some offices are willing to pay very high salaries to recruit physicians. Our agency must compete with these salaries to attract applicants. In light of the current situation, the OCME physician salaries were increased.

Dr. Beaman asked Dr. Pfeifer if we lost our accreditation? Dr. Pfeifer stated in 2009 the agency lost accreditation due to poor facilities and not enough staff. Obtaining accreditation is not easy and once it's lost, it's difficult to get back.

Fellowship -

Previous fellows, Drs. Deol and Doane successfully passed their forensic boards. Dr. Abreo has accepted an offer to stay with the agency. This will be contingent upon successful completion of her training. Both fellowship positions have been filled for the 2024-2025 academic year. Fellow interviews for the 2025-2026 Match are in progress now.

The agency applied for a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) grant to enhance the fellowship program. Funds would have assisted in expanding compensation, recruitment expenses, membership fees, etc. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in obtaining the grant.

Administration –

A 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) salary adjustments were given to most staff. We are still in the evaluation phase with Case Management System (CMS). Jerry Thomas was hired as a project manager to help with tasks like building maintenance, car fleets and other time-consuming projects.

Permits –

Due to a survey of what other states agencies are charging for a cremation or out of state permits, our agency is proposing an administrative rule change to increase permits fees. As of right now the cremation permit fee is \$200, we are proposing a new fee of \$235. This was last reviewed and increased in 2016.

Anthropology –

Unlike many other agencies, we have 3 full time anthropologists on staff. Dr. Pfeifer would like to have one more anthropologist for the Tulsa office. Market driven salary adjustments were distributed to all anthropologists.

Autopsy services –

The autopsy labs in Oklahoma City and Tulsa have semi-precious terrazzo floors. Oklahoma City's floor is now 6 years old and in need of maintenance. The Oklahoma City practice has 20,000 sq. ft. of this flooring and the maintenance will run approximately \$3.00 per square foot. We are in the process of requesting bids for this service.

We have engaged in a research study to assess the use of the CT scan along with bedside Randox toxicology testing. We will continue the study for another year or so. Dr. Pfeifer said at this point, the study looks very promising. Additionally, we routinely CT and Lodox (x-ray) every decedent. This reduces the waiting time for the pathologists since this process is done when the body is received.

Information Technology –

At the request of the Governor's office, each agency is required to assign an Artificial Intelligence (AI) expert. Franklin Antao has been selected to represent OCME.

Investigations –

The average scene response time has been reduced from 1 hour, 24 minutes to 1 hour and 12 minutes this is an average for all 77 counties.

Permit turnaround has also decreased. October 2021, the average was 16 hours 13 minutes. We're now averaging 10 hours and 47 minutes. The goal is 2 business days which we are well within.

Toxicology lab –

After 2 years, our toxicology lab is now International Organization for Standardization (IOS) accredited. With this accreditation we are now 1 of 16 toxicology labs that have joint accreditation with ABFT and ISO-17025. Having this ISO accreditation, our toxicology results and will be accepted all around the world.

Legislation –

Dr. Pfeifer has not seen legislation which directly affects the OCME. We are always watching for bills that might impact the agency. We have requested 1.2 million dollars yearly supplemental. This is funding for an additional pathologist, anthropologist, and support staff. Again, our agency is proposing an administrative rule change to the fee of permits. The budget workbook is complete. We are preparing for upcoming House and Senate budget hearings.

Priority project –

The priority project for the agency has not changed and will continue to be NAME reaccreditation by the end of 2025.

Financial update-

We presently have \$9.7M in unincumbered cash. Dr. Pfeifer proposed the money be used in the following manner. Reserve \$3M for 2 months payroll expenses. Dr. Pfeifer would like to allocate \$2M to the toxicology lab and Oklahoma City office expansion. We will know more in the upcoming weeks as we have additional discussions with all parties. Dr. Pfeifer gave an overview of salaries vs. caseload of other Medical Examiner/Corner offices nationwide. Due to the rapidly changing market, Dr. Pfeifer wants to be competitive with other Medical Examiner/Corner offices to bring in pathologist and keep them at our agency.

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

Dr. Lanter voiced his concerns regarding our agency competing with national salaries to attract fellow applicants and pathologist. This matter is something that Dr. Pfeifer and Dr. Lanter are having conversations about. The fellow salary was adjusted, which has increased interests in the program. We need to be aware of what other agencies are offering. Dr. Doane and Dr. Doel passed their certification examines on the first try. A fellow will be starting in July 2024 at the Tulsa Office.

- Discussion, possible action, and possible Executive Session for the purpose of discussing the employment, performance, and compensation of Dr. Eric Pfeifer, Chief Medical Examiner, provided that any action taken shall be in open session.

A motion was made by Dr. Harp to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing the performance, evaluation, and employment of the Chief Medical Examiner. Mr. Stiles seconded the motion, roll was called, and all were in favor.

Dr. Harp excused everyone that is not directly involved and announced they would be called back when needed.

The meeting room was reopened to the public. Dr. Harp motioned to exit executive session; Dr. Beaman seconded the motion. Roll was called and all were in favor.

Dr. Harp announced 2 proposals were discussed during Executive Session. The Board recommends an adjustment to the Chief Medical Examiner's salary to the maximum as allowable by statute.

Dr. Harp motioned to increase the salary of the Chief Medical Examiner to the maximum allowable. Mr. Stiles seconded the motion; roll was called, and all were in favor.

Secondly, the Board would like to invite a member of Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES) to the February 2024 meeting. They would like a representative to answer questions regarding adjustment limitations of physician compensation of the Chief Medical Examiner as the agency head as defined by statute.

Dr. Harp motioned to accept the recommendation of the Board to invite a representative from OMES to be available during the February 2024 meeting to answer questions regarding limitations of compensation by statute. Dr. Beaman seconded the motion; roll was called, and all were in favor.

New Business -
No new business.

Dr. Beaman motioned to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Harp seconded the motion. Roll was called and all were in favor. The meet was adjourned at 2:41 pm.