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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 8, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.  
921 NE 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 December 04, 2023, at 2:54 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. Harp, Dr. Magguilli, Ms. Marsee, Mr. Stiles, Dr. Beaman, Ms. Spurlock, Mr. Reed, and Dr. Pfeifer.

Members absent: Representative of the Oklahoma State Medical Association (OSMA).

Others Present: Dr. Josh Lanter (OCME), Madalynn Martin (OAG), Kari Learned (OCME), Jodi Dillion (OCME), Michele Krizan (OCME), Dr. Marc Harrison (OCME), and Elysa Imhoff (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 February 1, 2024, meeting. Ms. Marsee seconded the motion. Roll was called, Dr. Beaman and Mr. Reed abstained, and all others were in favor.

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

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

Dr. Pfeifer announced that the overarching priority has been and continues to be the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) reaccreditation. Both Dr. Pfeifer and Dr. Lanter would like to invite the NAME inspection team to visit OCME in January 2025. They are confident that the obstacles previously preventing reaccreditation have now been addressed. As of August 1st, OCME is fully staffed for the first time in 14 years. OCME remains one of the busiest practices in the United States, handling over 8,000 cases annually.

#### Physicians-

Since our last board meeting, both the Oklahoma City and Tulsa offices are now fully staffed with a total of 18 physicians and 2 fellows. The OCME now has a full complement of specialists, including two neuropathologists, a hematopathologist, and a pediatric pathologist.

#### Fellowship-

In July, two new fellows began their training, one at each office. Both fellowship positions for the 2025-2026 academic year have already been filled, and interviews for the 2026-2027 Match are currently underway. Our fellowship training program is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) and the program offers formal training in postmortem radiography and CT to all fellows—a distinction held by only four other programs in the country. Additionally, our presence on Facebook and Instagram has been highly effective in recruiting both fellows and staff.

#### Administration-

The agency has been actively engaged with budget management, the procurement of a new case management system (CMS), Workday implementation, as well as facilities and equipment maintenance. Strategic budget planning for the 2025-2026 fiscal year will begin soon. Additionally, our Finance Director, Michele Krizan, recently completed a five-year retrospective operational audit, which our agency successfully passed.

#### Anthropology-

As mentioned in our last meeting, we successfully hired an additional forensic anthropologist for the Tulsa office, who will start in December 2024. With is expansion, our anthropology team now has two dedicated vehicles, one assigned to each office, to facilitate scene investigations and the transportation of field equipment.

#### Autopsy Services

After occupying the Oklahoma City office for seven years, the autopsy floors have been refurbished. The Oklahoma City practice spans 19,000 square feet, and the maintenance of the floors costs approximately \$2.45 per square foot.

Additionally, Robert Sawyers has been promoted to the new Autopsy Services Supervisor for the Oklahoma City office, and he is doing an incredible job.

#### Information technology-

OCME is highly dependent on technology and having Franklin as our embedded Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES) IT representative continues to be incredibly valuable to us.

The agency is also working on acquiring a new case management system (CMS). While this is expected to be a multi-year project, we are nearing the completion of the bidding and evaluation process to finalize the selection of a vendor.

#### Investigations-

We are considering applying for a grant to acquire new two-way radios to enhance our emergency communication capabilities.

The average scene response time for July was 1 hour and 15 minutes, which is an average across all 77 counties.

Permit turnaround time has been reduced from 11 hours and 20 minutes, as reported at the last meeting, to 10 hours and 26 minutes. This is well within our goal of a 2-business-day turnaround.

#### Toxicology-

The current average turnaround time for toxicology results is under 90 days. However, our goal is to reduce the turnaround time further, aiming to complete 90% of cases within 60 days.

The OCME toxicology lab maintains dual accreditation with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the American Board of Forensic Toxicology (ABFT). In terms of caseload, we rank among the top ten busiest forensic toxicology labs in the nation. Our toxicologists and chemists conduct significantly more testing than the national average.

Dr. Cliburn recently delivered a compelling speech to the Attorney General's Council, highlighting a staggering 1000% increase in fentanyl-related deaths in Oklahoma over the past five years. The workload for our forensic chemists and toxicologists far surpasses national levels. In light of this, we plan to request funding from the legislature next year to add a fourth toxicologist to our team.

#### Legislation-

We received a \$300K increase in appropriations for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Unfortunately, this amount does not even cover the salary and benefits for a single forensic pathologist. As we have communicated to the Board and the Legislature, this shortfall has required us to dip into our cash reserves. Looking ahead, we plan to request an additional \$2.5 million for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

#### Priority projects-

The agency's priority project remains unchanged and will continue to be achieving NAME reaccreditation by early 2025.

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

Since our last meeting, three pathologists, including our current fellow, joined the Tulsa office. With these additions, morale has significantly improved. Sixteen years ago, when Dr. Lanter first started at OCME in Tulsa, there were only 2 doctors and 1 pathology technician. Today, the Tulsa office has 8 doctors and 6 pathology technicians. With these additions, both the Oklahoma City and Tulsa offices are now fully staffed.

NAME accreditation remains our top priority, and everyone is doing their part to help us earn back this accreditation.

Fee change for forensic science and laboratory services-

The agency has been reviewing our fee schedule and believes it's time for an update. Many of the fees related to toxicology and certain drug tests requested externally have significantly increased in cost.

We also believe it's necessary to raise our cremation and out-of-state transport permit fees. The proposed increase is \$35.00 per permit, which is still less than the compounded inflation since we last adjusted these fees in 2016. Implementing this increase would generate much-needed revenue for our agency. We process approximately 24,000 permits annually. Our turnaround time, which used to be 5 or 6 days, now averages approximately 10 hours. Achieving this faster turnaround has required significant resource investment, and the proposed fee adjustment will help us maintain these critical service levels.

Kari Learned mentioned that during the most recent legislative session, Senate Bill 1516 was passed to allow for an increase to the permit fees. The Governor signed the bill on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. The packet provided to the board members included a copy of Title 445:10-1-11, which addresses fees for forensic science and laboratory services as outlined in Title 63 O.S., Section 948.1, along with the proposed changes. Madalynn Martin also stated that if anyone has questions about the rule-making process, she is available to answer them.

Dr. Beaman motioned to authorize the agency to begin the 2025 permanent rule-making process to amend the fees as presented. Dr. Magguilli seconded the motion. Roll was called and all were in favor.

New business-

No new business.

Dr. Beaman motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Marsee seconded the motion. Roll was called and all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 2:27 pm.