

COMMISSION ON MEDICOLEGAL INVESTIGATIONS MEETING MINUTES

March 8, 2024

The meeting of the Commission on Medicolegal Investigations was held at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) in Farmington, CT on Friday, March 8, 2024.

Present: Todd D. Fernow, J.D. Chairman (Present)
John H. Sinard, M.D., Vice Chairman (Remotely)
Sidney M. Hopfer, PhD. Secretary (Present)
Jennifer Bourn, J.D. (Present)
Beth Frugale, DPH (Present)
Celia Pinzi (Remotely)
Michael Krinsky, M.D. (Remotely)
Susan Keane Baker, M.H.A. (Remotely)

Also Present: James R. Gill, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner
Maura E. DeJoseph, D.O., Deputy Chief Medical Examiner
Lincoln Dwayne Gordon, OCME Administrator
Holly Cuomo, Executive Secretary

Chairman Fernow called the meeting to order at 2:01 pm.

Noted that although all our meetings are open to the public, today's meeting is our annual designated public meeting where constituent groups are sent invitation letters. None of the invited guests attended the meeting.

The January 2024 minutes were reviewed and adopted with corrections.

Medical Examiner Summary:

Dr. Gill provided the Chief Medical Examiner report to the COMLI.

Autopsy Workload and Turnaround Times: In 2024, OCME is projecting to complete 2,730 autopsies. There were 2,790 autopsies performed in 2023. All full-time medical examiners are projected to perform fewer than 325 autopsies a year. Taking into consideration that some 2023 reports are still pending, the average 90-day turnaround was 94%, and 86% within 60 days.

Office Announcements: Dr. Gill announced that Fellow, Dr. Cori Clark has accepted a position with OCME. Fellow, Dr. Donald Turbiville was also offered a position but has decided to return to his home state of Texas and has accepted a position in San Antonio.

Two openings remain for Assistant Medical Examiners. Two outside applicants have been interviewed and plans are underway to have them visit the OCME office.

The 2023 accidental drug intoxication death counts have been released. There was a decrease of 8% from 2022. Fentanyl remains the most prevalent drug and is detected in about 85% of the accidental drug intoxication deaths. The data reflects what drugs are detected, including co-intoxicants and multi-drug intoxicants.

A meeting is being scheduled with The Office of the Child Advocate and Department of Children and Families to discuss the release of preliminary results, which may have caused interference with police investigations and interfered with family cooperation.

Storage at Facility: We have 88 bodies stored at OCME, including 35 remains that have been onsite for over 30 days.

Facility Updates: A bond subcommittee hearing is scheduled for March 18th. Based on the prefeasibility study, the recommendation is a new facility, not a renovation. The location for a new facility has not been identified, however DAS has had preliminary conversations with UCONN. In preparation for the March 18th hearing, Dr. Gill contacted DAS Commissioner Gilman to highlight our barriers to receiving full NAME accreditation and the urgency to move forward. The current funding allocation is based on the renovation proposal. If a new facility is approved, the bidding process will begin again. Since it is a different project necessary funding will increase significantly.

Fiscal Summary:

Lincoln Dwayne Gordon provided the fiscal update for the office.

Audit of Public Accounts: A draft audit report was issued and included four findings linking to the fiscal area. They are as follows: purchase orders (expenditures), deposits (revenue), reconciliation for cremation certificates (receipts), and GAAP forms (reporting). For each finding, the auditors prepared a procedural recommendation. OCME will be submitting our responses by 3/12/24, which include the system changes made to our procedures and steps taken to eliminate future discrepancies. The final analysis will be distributed to all members upon completion.

Agency Staffing: The March organizational chart was provided. As of March 1st, 58 full-time and 19 part-time positions are filled, leaving 6 vacant full-time positions and 5 vacant part-time positions, including the conversion position. Recruiting efforts continue to fill the vacancies.

Human Resources: Two Lab Assistant-1 have been promoted to Lab Assistant-2.

Fiscal:

Expenditures and Grants: The OCME is projecting a \$400,000 deficiency in personnel appropriation (PS). As part of the Budget Act, OPM withheld \$400,000 and they have until April 2024 to consider releasing the budgetary holdback to reduce the deficit. Budget updates are provided to OPM on a monthly basis detailing the cause of our deficit.

OPM granted a budget carry-forward of \$274,000 to assist with paying for the Security Person service. We will continue to pay for this service in the next biennium without additional funding.

NNPHI: We were approved for a reimbursement grant from the National Network of Public Health Institute (NNPHI). Grant money was used to reimburse our OE fund for the purchase of iPads and fingerprint scanners.

Lepow Fund: The Lepow Summary Sheet shows a steady balance with some accumulated interest. There is no expected usage of this fund. The fund is an educational account and is used for education purposes only.

ARPA: The full amount of the ARPA money is \$860,667 and is for 2-1/2 years. Funding is primarily used for PPE, toxicology testing identified as ARPA compliant and refrigerated trailers. All qualifying expenses need to be fully committed by December 31, 2024; however,

they do not need to be fully expended. We have been selected for a federal audit for ARPA in the future.

Revenue: A summary of revenue streams was reviewed. Most of the revenue collected and posted comes from cremation certificates. OCME is projecting cremation revenue to be close to \$3.5 million by the end of the fiscal year. The remaining revenue comes from record requests, histology, and photographs (\$60,000 or less per year). All revenue goes directly to the State General Fund.

Account Receivables: The outstanding balances have greatly decreased as a result of the increased electronic payments through EDRS. DPH inspectors have assisted us with past due receivables by addressing the outstanding invoices with funeral homes.

New Business:

Forensic Dentist: Liability coverage for volunteer consultants was discussed, as pertinent to a Forensic Odontologist who has assisted us with dental charting and comparisons. A recommendation was to discuss the medical liability coverage with the AG's office.

Unclaimed Decedents: Part of the State of Connecticut Anatomic Gift Statute states anyone who is unclaimed lying in state after a certain period of time and if no next of kin could be located, their body could be forwarded on to a medical school in state. UCONN and Quinnipiac have paid for and received anatomical gifts from other states for the purpose of research or education. Consensus was that this is not an initiative that OCME would lead, however if the medical schools were interested, OCME would be supportive.

Other Conversations:

COMLI Officers: The Law Professor appointee position remains vacant.

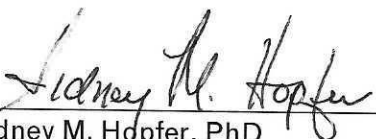
Election of Officers: Election of Officers remains a standard agenda item. As previously determined, members will stay in their current positions until they no longer wish to, or somebody else wishes to have an election, in which case an election will occur immediately.

Executive Session: An Executive Session was not needed.

Next Meeting: The next COMLI meeting is scheduled for June 14, 2024.

Adjournment:

There were no other matters to address. Followed by a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 3:14 pm.



Sidney M. Hopper, PhD
Secretary