

COMMISSION ON MEDICOLEGAL INVESTIGATIONS MEETING MINUTES

June 14, 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, June 14, 2024

Present:

Todd D. Fernow, J.D. Chairman (Present)
Sidney M. Hopfer, Ph.D. Secretary (Present)
Jennifer Bourn, J.D. (Remotely)
Beth Frugale, DPH (Remotely)
Susan Keane Baker, M.H.A. (Remotely)

Not Present:

John H. Sinard, M.D., Vice Chairman
Celia Pinzi
Michael Krinsky, M.D.
Maura E. DeJoseph, D.O., Deputy Chief Medical Examiner

Also Present:

James R. Gill, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner
Lincoln Dwayne Gordon, OCME Administrator
Holly Cuomo, Executive Secretary

Chairman Fernow called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm.

The minutes from the March 8, 2024 meeting were adopted without 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 around 2,700 autopsies. The projection for homicide cases decreased, which follows a national trend. All full-time medical examiners are projected to perform fewer than 250 full autopsies this year. Taking into consideration that some 2023 reports are still pending, the 60-day and 90-day turnaround are being met within mid-80's to low 90's.

Scene Investigations: Investigator scene presence was 99% and 100% for March and April respectively.

Office Announcements:

The three vacant Assistant Medical Examiners positions have been filled, with anticipated start dates are in July and August.

One fellow starting in July 2024. In addition, the Office has matched for the July 2025 fellowship opening, and there continues to be a chance to gain another.

Storage at Facility: The Office has 80 bodies stored at OCME, including 29 remains that have been onsite for over 30 days. Due to the volume of cases this past weekend, the Office needed to use the leased trailer to accommodate the overflow.

EDRS Updates: The Office continues to work through scenarios with the Quincy company. UCONN Campus implemented IT changes which disrupted the communication portal. This has been resolved and testing scenarios have resumed.

Cremation Approval Update: A discussion took place with the Chief State Attorney regarding the importance of timely cremation approvals in homicide cases. He will remind the Prosecutors as well. This effort will ensure the family is able to receive the remains and move forward with final disposition.

Facility Updates: The cost estimates for the different options are being completed by the architects. If the cost analysis is completed, we could potentially meet with the Bond Commission in September. Different scenarios continue to be discussed but first and foremost we need the approval from the Bond Commission.

Fiscal Summary:

Lincoln Dwayne Gordon provided the fiscal update for the office.

Agency Staffing: The June organizational chart was provided. As of June 1st, 57 full-time and 18 part-time positions are filled, leaving 7 vacant full-time positions and 5 vacant part-time positions, including the conversion position. Recruiting efforts continue to fill the vacancies created by staff shift changes or agency departure.

Human Resources: A Lab Assistant-2 was hired in April. We've received positive feedback regarding her progress.

Fiscal:

Expenditures and Grants: As part of the Budget Act, OPM withheld \$400,000 and have since agreed to release the funds in June. With the release of these funds and the decrease in projected expenses the Office should have a slight surplus this year. The surplus is contingent upon release of the funds.

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.

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 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, but do not need to be fully expended. The surplus noted is part of the original 2-1/2-year budget and allocated for expenses incurred during the first 6 months of next year. Funding will continue without a lapse.

Revenue: A summary of revenue streams was reviewed. Most of the revenue collected and posted comes from cremation certificates. OCME is projecting revenue to be close to \$3.3 million by the end of the fiscal year. All revenue goes directly to the State General Fund.

Account Receivables: The outstanding account receivable balances continue to decrease with the increased use of the electronic payments through EDRS. DPH inspectors continue to assist us with resolving past due receivables with funeral homes.

Other Conversations:

Audit of Public Accounts: The final audit report was shared, and the four findings linking to the fiscal area were discussed in detail and included the process changes put into effect to avoid future findings. The findings are as follows: purchase orders (expenditures), deposits (revenue), reconciliation for cremation certificates (receipts), and GAAP forms (reporting).

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 as soon as possible.

Executive Session: An Executive Session was not needed.

Next Meeting: The next COMLI meeting is scheduled for September 13, 2024.

Adjournment:

There were no other matters to address. Followed by a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 2:56 pm.



Sidney M. Hopper, PhD
Secretary