

COMMISSION ON MEDICOLEGAL INVESTIGATIONS MEETING MINUTES
September 13, 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, September 13, 2024

Present:

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

Not Present:

Sidney M. Hopfer, Ph.D. Secretary
Holly Cuomo, OCME Executive Secretary

Also Present:

James R. Gill, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner
Maura E. DeJoseph, D.O., Deputy Chief Medical Examiner
Lincoln Dwayne Gordon, OCME Administrator

Chairman Fernow called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

The minutes from the June 14, 2024 meeting were adopted without corrections.

Medical Examiner Summary:

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

Office Announcements:

The three Associate Medical Examiners (AME's) vacancies have been filled, and the need for per diem support has significantly decreased.

Autopsy Workload and Turnaround Times: In 2024, OCME is projecting to complete about 2,679 autopsies, which is a slight decrease from 2023. The projection for homicide cases decreased, which follows the national trend. All full-time medical examiners are projected to perform fewer than 200 full autopsies this year. In June, the case completion turn around was 90% within 60-days and 94% in 90-days. It is anticipated that case completion numbers will stay above 90%.

Scene Investigations: Investigator scene presence was 98% in June and August, and 96% in July.

Storage at Facility: There are currently 81 bodies stored at OCME, including 33 remains that have been onsite for over 30 days.

Fellowship: Fellowship Program has one current fellow, and the program was re-accredited by ACGME 8 months ago.

Facility Updates: The different architectural proposals are being reviewed by OPM.

***Note: Dr. Krinsky joined the meeting.*

EDRS Updates: Working toward finalizing the testing of different scenarios with Quincy Technologies. The next step will be to test current scenarios to ensure the bridge is working and the systems are communicating to accurately capture the data.

Surrogate Testimony (Smith vs. Arizona): NAME and the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO) have published advice to Medical Examiners when testifying on a case for a report completed by someone else (secondary information), as it pertains to the Smith vs. Arizona case. The COMLI discussed that these are difficult matters and will be determined case by case over time.

Introduction: Dr. Mary K. Schwerdt was introduced to the Commission.

Fiscal Summary:

Lincoln Dwayne Gordon provided the fiscal update for the office.

Agency Staffing: The September organizational chart was provided. As of September 1st, 61 full-time and 19 part-time positions are filled, leaving 3 vacant full-time positions and 4 vacant part-time positions. Recruiting efforts continue to fill the vacancies created by staff shift changes or agency departure.

Human Resources: 4 candidates have been selected to be interviewed for the vacant FAO position. This position has been vacant since December 2023.

Fiscal:

OPM Budget Analyst: Matt LaFayette is our new Budget Analyst. Holly Williams remains available through June 30th.

Expenditures and Grants: There isn't a projected deficit for our labor costs or personnel services currently. The carry-forward budget is \$300,000 and will assist with paying for the Security Person service.

Lepow Fund: The Lepow Summary Sheet shows a donation of \$1,000 has been received. The fund is used for education purposes only.

ARPA: The ARPA money has been fully utilized and will expire at the end of the year. The monthly costs for the refrigerated trailer and C-box will be absorbed in our budget.

Revenue: A summary of revenue streams was reviewed. OCME is projecting revenue to be between \$3.2 and \$3.3 million by the end of the fiscal year. The projected revenue fluctuates based on cremation and medical record fees. 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. The cremation reconciliation process was completed, and everything has been accounted for. There is a process in place if someone comes to the office to pay for medical records with cash.

Proposed OCME Budget: We are halfway through the biennium budget build for fiscal years 2026 and 2027. The budget for next biennium was due September 1st and included current services and a request to the Capital Budget for the building.

We've been authorized \$28 million in the prior Capital Bond action and requested \$5 million to be used next fiscal year. The OCME Capital request for 2027 includes \$45 million of additional funding for the facility project. This amount is based on architect project estimated cost.

In terms of the current service budget, technical adjustments were made for wage adjustments and other payroll expenditures related to collective bargaining agreements.

Old Business:

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.

New Business:

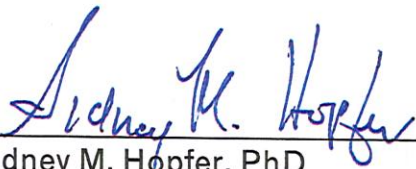
Annual Trainings: The COMLI inquired about the ethics and confidentiality trainings provided to OCME staff, and particularly to the Medical Examiner staff. OCME will present the current training information and proposals at a future meeting.

Executive Session: An Executive Session was not needed.

Next Meeting: The next COMLI meeting is scheduled for November 8, 2024.

Adjournment:

There were no other matters to address. Followed by a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 3:02 pm.



Sidney M. Hopfer, PhD
Secretary