

## **COMMISSION ON MEDICOLEGAL INVESTIGATIONS MEETING MINUTES**

March 14, 2025

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 14, 2025.

### **Present:**

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

### **Also Present:**

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

### **Public:**

John Cascio, CT Funeral Directors Association (Remotely, brief attendance)  
Jesse Gomes, CT Funeral Directors Association (Remotely, brief attendance)  
Lissa Lovetere-Stone, CT Funeral Directors Association (Remotely, brief attendance)  
Melisa Melin, CT Funeral Directors Association (Remotely, brief attendance)

### **Not Present:**

Maura E. DeJoseph, D.O., Deputy Chief Medical Examiner

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Chairman Fernow called the meeting to order at 2:03 pm.

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 to attend. Four members from the CT Funeral Directors Association attended.

Dr. Gill introduced the OCME Supervisors to the members of COMLI.

Celia Pinzi introduced the members of the CT Funeral Directors Association who were attending virtually. Melissa Melin, President, discussed ways that The Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) could provide Funeral Directors with the demographic information needed to initiate a death certificate, as well as notification that the decedent is at OCME.

A brief conversation took place regarding a recent bill proposal for a “short form death certificate”. Dr. Gill also reminded the funeral directors of the importance of picking up a decedent in a timely manner due to lack of storage capacity at OCME.

Members of the CT Funeral Directors Association were thanked for attending the meeting and opted to exit the remote session.

The minutes from the January 24, 2025 meeting were adopted with corrections.

**Medical Examiner Summary:**

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

**Office Announcements:**

The 2024 drug intoxication death data will be released next week. The data shows a significant 25% decrease in deaths from 2023. In 2024, there were fewer than 1,000 accidental drug intoxication deaths, compared to over 1,300 in 2023.

During the last 6 months of 2024, 116 decedents became organ/tissue donors. Due to these donations, 38 organs were retrieved, and 78 tissue recoveries took place.

OPM Commissioner Beckham and his assistants visited OCME and toured the facility. Dr. Gill reviewed some of the options for our facility and Commissioner Beckham proposed a new option that had not previously been explored. DAS and OPM resumed oversight of the project and are actively working on next steps.

**Autopsy Workload and Turnaround Times:**

The number of autopsies for 2025 is estimated to be about 2,800, noting this is only based on two months of data.

Case completion data for 2024 was reviewed. Greater than 94% of cases were complete within 90 days, and 87% within 60 days.

**Scene Investigations:** Investigator scene presence was 99% and 98% for January and February respectively.

**Storage at Facility:** There are currently 55 bodies stored at OCME, including 19 remains that have been onsite for over 30 days. These numbers vary drastically during a given month.

**EDRS Integration Updates:** No additional updates were provided. EDRS discussions took place with members of the CT Funeral Directors Administration at the beginning of the meeting.

**Fiscal Summary:**

Lincoln Dwayne Gordon provided the fiscal update for the office.

**Agency Staffing:** The March organizational chart was provided. As of March 1<sup>st</sup>, 54 full-time and 19 part-time positions are filled. Written offers were made for the two full-time investigators and a part-time investigator. An additional process for justification to refill vacancies has been implemented state-wide, therefore the remaining vacancies will be prioritized based on agency need.

**Fiscal:**

**Expenditures and Grants:** There is a projected deficit of \$181,000 for personnel services. An internal review of staffing and personnel funding is being carried out, and changes are being made to offset the projected deficit where possible.

In November, OPM gave a directive to reduce our PS budget by \$100,000 by the end of the fiscal year. The directive was modified to allow the Office to reduce the OE budget (other expenses) instead of personnel/labor funding.

**Fellowship Grants:** Fellowship grant money for FY '26 and '27 has been approved and allotted.

**Lepow Fund:** The fund is used for education purposes only. In FY '25, one course was paid for as directed by the Chief Medical Examiner. The revenue is from interest and a donation made by Dr. Gill.

**Revenue:** A summary of revenue streams was reviewed. OCME is projecting revenue to be over \$3.4 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.

The FY '25 3rd quarter cremation reconciliation process will take place in April.

**Account Receivables:** Outstanding account receivable balances continue to decrease with the increased use of the electronic payments through EDRS.

**Information Technology Server Project:** The upgrade of the IT Server room has been started. UCONN Health has given the Office server racks and a new switch, which saved over \$100,000. UCONN Health has also assisted IT staff with this project. We anticipate utilizing \$125,000 obtained from the DPH CDC-SUDOR grant to refresh 4 servers. This is a necessary upgrade since the current system is at maximum capacity.

**Old Business:**

**COMLI Officers:** One 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:**

No additional agenda items were discussed.


**Executive Session:**

An Executive Session was not needed.

**Next Meeting:** The next COMLI meeting is scheduled for June 6, 2025.

**Adjournment:**

There were no other matters to address. Followed by a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 3:09 pm.

  
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Sidney M. Hopper, PhD  
Secretary