

DISTRICT 5 AND 24 MEDICAL EXAMINER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

The District 5 and 24 Medical Examiner Advisory Committee met in the Marion County Fire Rescue Training Room on Friday, February 26, 2021 at 9:03 a.m.

Roll Call and Determination of a Quorum – Roll call was taken and a quorum was met.

Members Present

Josh Blake, Lake County Board of County Commissioners
Garry Breeden, Chairman, Sumter County Board of County Commissioners
Holly Davis, Citrus County Board of County Commissioners
Jeff Gold, Marion County Board of County Commissioners

Members Absent

Jeff Holcomb, Hernando County Board of County Commissioners

In Attendance

James Banta, Fire Chief, Marion County Fire Rescue
Bart Walker, Deputy Chief, Marion County Fire Rescue
Rodney Mascho, Division Chief, Marion County Fire Rescue
Cassandra Li, Administrative and Financial Services Manager, Marion County Fire Rescue
Elizabeth Alt, Senior Assistant County Attorney, Marion County Board of County Commissioners (via telephone)
Lindsey Bayer, Director of Operations, Medical Examiner's Office
Meloney Koontz, Assistant County Manager, Seminole County Board of County Commissioners
Pam Doherty, Marion County Fire Rescue
Audrey Fowler, Budget Director, Marion County Clerk of the Court

Proof of Publication – Legal advertisements were published on February 12, 2021 in the Hernando Sun LLC publication #4044 and February 14, 2021 in Citrus County Chronicle #1353-0214 SUCRN, Ocala Star Banner #A000977267, Orlando Sentinel #OS6880080, Orlando Sentinel/Lake Edition, #LAK6880081 and The Villages Daily Sun #00988387.

Review and Approval of August 19, 2020 Minutes – The minutes from the August 19, 2020 meeting were submitted for approval.

Motion: Commissioner Gold made a motion to approve the August 19, 2020 minutes and Commissioner Blake seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

Old and New Business

- FY 20/21 1st Quarter Report – This report is being sent out on a monthly basis and reflects year-to-date total autopsies, external exams, remote external exams and cremation approvals.
- FY 21/22 Budget – Professional Services increased by \$10,000, Contractual Services had a \$500 increase, Communications shows a \$3,400 savings, Postage and Freight was up \$100, Repairs & Maintenance - Building/Grounds has stayed consistent, Repairs & Maintenance -

Equipment was up due to scale maintenance, Advertising/Legal increased due to scheduling more meetings and more lines in printed notices, Computer Software was budgeted at \$150,000 for new software with an annual maintenance of \$25,000-\$30,000, Operating Supplies was covered through the Coverdell Grant, Computer Equipment went up slightly, Capital is projected at \$650,000 to \$675,000 and Reserve for Contingencies stayed at \$50,000. When extra money was needed, it was pulled from Capital Outlay. Utility Services, Rentals & Leases, Insurance Premiums, Office Supplies and Dues and Memberships all stayed the same.

Dr. Wolf requested an increase of \$46,150 per page 5 of the Medical Examiner contract. This was split between District 5 and District 24 with the population differential split of 71.48% to District 5 and 28.52% to District 24. The Medical Examiner fee was 5% of the recurring operating. The Medical Examiner contract followed the normal percentages based on population.

Audrey Fowler advised that statutorily, Marion County is limited to 10% going towards reserves and 20% going towards cash carry forward. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, the fund balance projection in Capital Outlay was \$947,000 coming forward.

The District 5 county population numbers were published in January by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) at the University of Florida. For FY 20/21 projections, the percentage of population was how the cost for each county was proportioned and applied to the budget.

Motion: Commissioner Gold made a motion to approve the FY 21/22 budget and Commissioner Blake seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

- Medical Examiner Records Room – the county was able to expend the money for the records room and this can be relocated to another building.
- Data Storage Request for Proposals – Marion County has narrowed the proposals down to Vertique and Highland. Vertique is a Medical Examiner software company with a lot of added features. Highland is a content management system that is highly customizable. They have built two complete Medical Examiner software databases to show us. They are both highly functional. The RFP committee will meet for final scoring. Dr. Wolf mentioned that Vertique is a much longer established company. She also said they received a call from the Health Department that runs the electronic data registration system regarding Highland asking questions about the system. Bids were done and the committee needs to make the final decision. The contract goes into place on October 1, 2021. The committee needs a definitive price to make the final decision. Commissioner Gold requested the committee make sure the security of the system was reviewed by the Information Technology (IT) Department.
- Paymentus – Online Payment/Collections: IT is working with Paymentus to accept online payments. Marion County Fire Rescue is working with the County Attorney's Office on language for the collections notice and an online payment disclaimer. The IT projected timeline was to go live approximately March 15. The County held back sending out notices of collections so they could give funeral homes the ability to pay online. Once they do, they will wait two months as determined at the last meeting to send out any collection notices for past

due invoices. The cost of the online service goes to the consumer and not to Marion County Fire Rescue. The vendor will pay a 2.65 % online charge (of the total price of the bill) when paying by credit card. If paying by e-check, the vendor will incur a \$.50 fee. Billing for inmates would be included.

Conceptual Plan – The District 5 and 24 Agreement addressed the concept that the Medical Examiner facility is in need of additional space within a five-year time frame and we are currently in the third year. We contracted with Rispoli and Associates and London and Associates to look at making the existing building work for another 20-25 years. It would cost as much to make the existing building functional as it would to build a new building. This concept shows what it will take to build what is needed. Based on the square footage of this design, we are looking at roughly \$12,000,000 for this building. If they add more volume to their workload, they will need another pathologist in order to maintain accreditation. Marion County Fire Rescue will meet with the Medical Examiner's Office today to explore options of possibly doing a minor expansion on the existing building to get us through the next three years before it is time to build.

The existing property is landlocked. In order to expand, the building would need an underground drainage retention area (DRA) which is extremely expensive, as well as extra parking spaces. The building is currently owned by Lake County. Under the agreement, Lake County is supposed to turn ownership over to us. If the Medical Examiner vacates, then we turn ownership back to Lake County. Dr. Wolf would like to stay in the Leesburg/Lake County area and as central as possible.

The A1 conceptual plan page shows the morgue as a separate building. The top is a loading dock for deliveries. The A2 page is a blowup of the Administration building. This concept shows an increase of office space, a conference/classroom large enough to hold staff meetings and Medical Examiner meetings. The A3 page is a blow up of the morgue with a loading dock, a drive through garage, expanded cooler space, a larger x-ray room, more office space, more pathologists, better tissue/evidence storage areas, a better bathroom and clean-up area, an enclosed breezeway and intake/discharge rooms that are large enough to stack up to three coolers.

These plans will go to London and Associates so they can let us know how many acres of land this building will need. The committee will look at land swaps or other county owned land. The thought process is for each Commissioner to talk to their respective boards and come up with plans on how to get there. The committee will work to get a break down of how it will be funded, where it will be, the expansion capability and what it will cost each county. The county needs direction on the cost, and if it is going to be broken down by population percentage. Dr. Wolf gave the accreditation standards to Chief Mascho and Joe Rispoli to make sure these standards are met. Chief Mascho said he can email the percentage breakdown of the \$12,000,000 to the committee. Commissioner Breeden thought it was too early to do that and he would like to see a more complete package. He would like to see if we can find donated land and check the size and price of a parcel. Dr. Wolf said this building is designed for expansion because they don't want to be doing this again in 10 years. Depending on the parcel of land purchased, the intent is to last roughly 20 years before needing to expand.

Commissioner Breeden asked if we currently need all these offices. One thought is to build a shell and develop only what's needed.

- **Industrial Permit Update** – As a result of the mercury incident, the City of Leesburg thought the Medical Examiner's Office was a hazardous waste creator and they needed an Industrial Use Permit to be on their water system. It was later determined that the Medical Examiner's Office was not required to have an Industrial Use Permit. This process cost the Medical Examiner's Office \$5,000, which was paid and completed.
- **Medical Examiner By-Laws** – At the last meeting, there was discussion on creating By-Laws that give guidelines to the Advisory Board. Since then, Marion County Fire Rescue has worked with our County Attorney's Office creating these By-Laws. Language was included to explain if Seminole County ever decided to become a member, it would accommodate them and establish what is required. The By-Laws will establish the annual February meetings, what will require a vote, staff requirements, an official agenda and legal notices being published with a standard protocol to follow. It was determined that quarterly meetings will be set up and any meetings that are deemed not necessary will be canceled. If the By-Laws are adopted, they will be presented to the Marion County Board of County Commissioners to be ratified. There will be a vote for Chairman and Vice Chair at the next Medical Examiner's meeting.

Commissioner Breeden asked if Seminole County would like to have a Commissioner on the Advisory Board or continue to have a representative attend the meetings. They requested to keep it the way it is currently.

A motion was made to approve the proposed By-Laws.

Motion: Commissioner Davis made a motion to approve the proposed By-Laws and Commissioner Blake seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

- Quarterly meetings will be set up ahead of time for February, May, August and November. The meeting dates currently set up for the remainder of 2021 are May 12, August 11 and November 10, each beginning at 2:00 p.m. The location will be determined. These are tentative dates.

Next Meeting Date – The next meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday, May 12, 2021 at 2:00 p.m. at a location to be determined.

Adjournment – There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 10:04 a.m.

Garry Breeden, Chairman