

**Office of the Cook County Medical Examiner
Advisory Committee Meeting- November 21, 2014
Cook County Building | 4th Floor Conference Room | 11:00am**

Attendance

Present: **Dr. Enrique Beckmann**, *Chairman*; **Sergeant Jason Moran**, *Cook County Sheriff's Office - Vice Chairman*; **Mark Rizzo**, *Funeral Director, I.D.F.P.R - Secretary*; **Susan Dyer**, *Funeral Director*; **Daniel Gallagher**, *Cook County State's Attorney's Office*; **Elizabeth Gorman**, *Cook County Commissioner*; **Spencer Leak Jr.**, *Funeral Director*; **Commander Eugene Roy**, *Chicago Police Department*

Absent: **Reverend Vuanita Battle-Maze**, *Vitas Hospice*; **Isaac McCoy**, *President/CEO Urban Mosaic*; **Rabbi Moshe Wolf**, *Police Chaplain - CPD/CFD*;

Guests Present: Martha Martinez, CCBOA; Dr. Stephen Cina, Chief Medical Examiner of Cook County; Dr. Ponni Arunkumar, Deputy Chief Medical Examiner of Cook County; James Sledge, Executive Officer - CCME; Nadine Jakubowski, Deputy Executive Officer - CCME; Robert Meza, CCBOA; Frank Shuftan, CCBOA; Consuelo Alvarez, CCME; Steven P. Smith, CCME; Toni Preckwinkle, President - Cook County Board of Commissioners; Tasha Cruzat, Deputy Chief of Staff to President; Mary Marik, Medical Records - CCME

Call to Order/Roll Call

MEAC meeting is called to order at 11:02 a.m. by Chairman Beckmann
Secretary Rizzo does roll call and announces there is a quorum

McCoy has excused absence due to a death in the family (Chairman Beckmann)

Introductions: Tasha Cruzat (Deputy Chief of Staff to President); Mary Marik, Medical Records - CCME; President Toni Preckwinkle, Cook County Board of Commissioners

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of September 19, 2014 are reviewed by committee

Motion to approve September 19, 2014 minutes - Roy

Seconded by Gorman

No Discussion

Motion passed unanimously by committee

Previous meeting minutes requiring amendments will be presented to committee at January 2015 meeting

Address by Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle to committee:

General comments to MEAC

Thanks to all of you for your work

Difficulties at the Medical Examiner office came out in the worst way – In the Sun-Times

Grateful to Dr. Cina and ME staff for good work done and grateful to MEAC for your support with issues and policy changes

It is important for government to stay in touch and this committee helps with that

Any questions?

– *Chairman Beckmann*

Would like to voice concerns from State's Attorney Opinion - I don't believe this committee is attempting to be involved in the day to day operations of the CCMEO, we understand that this is totally under the purview of Dr. Cina

Questions have arisen here – Our mandate in the ordinance states that we are to advise – what is the mechanism for that to occur? When issues that are brought and CCMEO are given suggestions by this

committee - Is it at the discretion of the CCMEO to let us know if approved or not - We need a way to close the loop/find out where the input of the committee goes

If we don't know what policies and procedures are how do we know what is going on? Should policies and procedures be provided to us?

Besides the fiduciary responsibility of the committee to the dignity of the deceased – we need a formalized mechanism to bring issues to fruition

We meet – address issues – we go over what Dr. Cina wants input on, what he wants to bring up
When the advice we provide doesn't get implemented - then negative press comes out

– *President Preckwinkle*

It is extraordinarily unlikely that the media will come to the MEAC, they will come the President and to Dr. Cina

It sounds like you want a formal response to the disposition of the issue

I suggest a sub-committee of the Chairman, Martinez and Commissioner Gorman meet with Dr. Cina and see if the issue can be resolved – This committee can then respond back to the MEAC

If you would like to have a report included in the minutes this sub-committee can provide it

If something were to come up, it is in the minutes and can be referenced

- *Chairman Beckmann*

The concern this committee has is that the advice presented to the CCMEO is not being taken – We are taking the time out of our schedules to meet and advise.

– *Martinez*

History of original MEAC, formed well over 20 years ago, met one time

– *President Preckwinkle*

We listen to advice and counsel of committees but we don't always follow it

Dr. Cina has expressed appreciation for help and advice. The issue is the response to the MEAC, what is the feedback mechanism?

– *Vice Chairman Moran*

The issue with the question posed to the State's Attorney's Office, is that no committee member ever asked it. The day-to-day operations of the CCMEO is of little interest to us, I believe we are here to provide advice on the problems that have historically plagued the office. As an example, the investigation of unidentified deceased person cases, the final disposition of indigent, unclaimed, and unidentified deceased persons, Homewood Memorial Gardens Cemetery, and the new cremation policy.

– *President Preckwinkle*

You offer advice, whether it's taken or not, than document it
What I suggested was a committee that reports back in response

– *E. Beckmann*

Thank you to President Preckwinkle

– *President Preckwinkle*

Grateful to everyone who takes time to serve on this committee

President Preckwinkle, Tasha Cruzat leave MEAC meeting

Reports

Chairman

– *Chairman Beckman*

We have amply discussed this issue, not knowing the president was going to address this herself.

Are there any additional concerns regarding this issue?

There are none.

Will meet with the committee and discuss this issue and its resolution

Since it is the last meeting before the Annual Report I would have liked to briefly review our goals, except for the specifics of the mechanisms we spoke of – but this will have to be moved to the 2015 agenda

I would like to invite a professional to our deliberations – a funeral celebrant, psychologist, specialist in death and dying – I met with her formally – she expressed interest in joining – I would like to invite this person to our committee

– *Vice Chairman Moran*

Would this person be a new member or a visitor?

–*Beckman*

Depends on what committee wants, we can invite her to speak and see what she can contribute

- *Vice Chairman Moran*

Will have to consult by-laws, I believe only the president or commissioners can appoint members to this committee

– *Roy*

I believe we need to solve other issues first – we need to clarify our role first – maybe invite her to speak only

She can come as a public member and address this committee and share any input

– *Dr. Cina*

I have no problem with her coming in - I think we have made great strides with respect to dignity of deceased

I apologize if I have not been open and transparent to any issues that have arisen regarding the input of this committee – this is one of President Preckwinkle's primary directives

– *Vice Chairman Moran*

I never had a sense that communication was not good with CCMEO or that we were being ignored, the question posed to the State's Attorney's Office was the problem

I would also like to mention that we need to follow the process detailed in our by-laws for changes in venue for our meetings; according to our by-laws the committee is the only one that can change the venue. For today's meeting, the change came from Martinez to Sledge to Antonia and then to committee via email. In the future, the process should come from the President's Office to our Chairman and then to the committee. Obviously, we would always accommodate the President's schedule.

Bureau of Administration

- *Martinez*

The budget was passed on 11/14/14 – The approved budget is \$10.4 million and change – a slight increase of \$100,000 over last year's for operational expenditures at CCME

CCMEO

-Dr. Cina

Staffing is up from 78 to 114, with goal of 129.

We have made great strides in pouches and handling of remains - we have improved the dignity of how remains are handled

To get full NAME accreditation for tox department, we are doing to do an overhaul – QA/QC Officer, more toxicology staff

We are working on the last of Phase II deficiencies

We gave up on CT scanner – still seeking grant funding

- J. Moran

Are the deficiencies in tox due to lack of personnel or equipment?

- Dr. Cina

Some equipment is outdated

Vision is to bring up to standard practices - outdated technology, case management - effective turnaround time. Personnel is key to the vision/accreditation, overhaul of standard practices, certified in new technology, case determination analysis, bring people to new technology, overhaul of procedures and policies - We need to up our game to diagnosis

Deficiency is in context of being certified for NAME accreditation - To have best practices

Dr. Wagner already getting ready for approval for toxicology certification.

SOP deficiencies improved, outdated technologies, being updated - will expand drug testing elements.

Serial testing “will up our game for more accurate readings”

- Meza

For clarification, the deficiencies were for accreditation and not any of the CCME standards in place?

- Dr. Cina

Statistics – YTD

75 Disclaimed have been cremated (Only 44% of families have picked up cremains)

November had 17 cremations - none have been claimed by family.

73 Unclaimed have been cremated

Unidentified burial at Mt. Olivet in August and future date in December

- Gorman

Board should memorialize fetal burials at Mt. Olivet

- Sledge

1 Cremation Contract - Received 4 bids determined to be unresponsive as a result we have no responsive bids for cremation

If MEAC has questions or concerns please bring them to light now.

Procurement made mistake - Not what we wanted - 1 year instead of 2 - We have to start bid process over again

Right now money on current contract for 5 more cremations - what do we do in the mean time?

Quote says have to respond by 11/24/14 – 12/1 starts new fiscal year, we are eligible for another 5k - Put another quote out, 5 vendors can bid on quote - this is how process will go until permanent RFP is approved and goes out - Then we have 2 years

MBE/WBE requirements are different for quote/contract

Burial contract was an active RFP on the street - No bidders, but 2 requests for applications

Putting together new burial RFP to put back out - Submitted to procurement for language - then it will go out as RFP

May the committee see a copy?

Cannot circulate RFP until 12/2/14 when it goes out

– *Chairman Beckmann*

For the future, changing venues for the committee meeting must be changed by the MEAC Officers, not outside sources.

– *Sledge*

There was a discussion at the previous meeting, that due to the budget meetings, there may have been a conflict. The fact that President Preckwinkle wanted to attend, set the overall tone as to venue for this meeting to accommodate her schedule

- *Chairman Beckmann*

The budget has been approved prior to this meeting.

–*Secretary Rizzo*

Regarding Mt. Olivet and getting funeral directors to volunteer – this becomes more difficult if cemetery is being paid

Catholic cemeteries have been burying for nothing - maybe we can make formal agreement for this?

We are happy to take any free service - Maybe we can create documented agreement for this

Next burial scheduled - Mt. Olivet 12/4/14 at 1pm - Archbishop Blasé Cupich will preside over burials - Heavy press coverage - Hearses instead of vans to bring fetals - Meet and greet in chapel or outside – archbishop wants opportunity to meet everyone

- *Dr. Cina*

Key Vacancy at CCME office - Chief of Investigations position open.

-*Secretary Rizzo*

Did Anthony Brucci retire or resign?

-*Dr. Cina*

Anthony Brucci did not retire or resign

3 meetings this week with agencies for EBOLA plan – National cases don't fall under CCME jurisdiction – 1st responder calls 311 to call hazmat to scene – do not want to bring into facility – we are prepared if necessary – CDC recommends not transporting or embalming – EBOLA is not our jurisdiction, because typically victim passes away in hospital due to known illness and attending physician will sign DC Trailer truck off-site with no autopsies is how CCME would handle cases.

– *Dyer*

2 hour presentation with Cook County funeral directors - surveyed and a few are comfortable with handling EBOLA cases

– *Dr. Cina*

Virus stays alive up to 72 hours -Danger in exposure to fluids

Ongoing problem (unrelated to Ebola) - physicians do not want to sign death certificates - With hospice deaths the problem is attending physician, treated patient on Monday and death happened on Tuesday, many rotating doctors need to sign off as attending - Doctors who go to people's homes will not sign DC

“Probable” is acceptable cause of death for CCME

We need education and enforcement - feel free to report them to medical board - Need to put together an online tutorial - will help doctors sign death certificate

2 items need advice on - FH cases doctor not signing death certificate - we want investigators to go to death scenes - funeral home cases are low on priority for CCMEO

What kind of backlash is there if we start this - If FH brings body to CCMEO, inspection takes place and doctor signs death certificate – it's quicker for office

- *Secretary Rizzo*

Will there be a fee paid to the FH for bringing body? What priority do we get or will we have to wait?

- *Dr. Cina*

Most happen after hours - wait will be minimal if coordinate with Intake department - It will not be an admitted body, only into Investigations, it doesn't get scanned in, still a FH case

6 to 9 am busy for Investigations department, getting things together for doctors - Restrictions for body pick up will not apply

– *M. Rizzo*

ME still has 11am-8pm for removal times - Suggestion of 9-6 or 10-6, or even 10-7

– *Dr. Cina*

Our Office will get back to you on pick up times

Sub-committee Reports/Old-New Business

- Chairman Beckmann

Subcommittee reports, along with, Old and New Business moved to January meeting due to time constraints. This includes Annual Report which should be approved by January 16, and is due January 30th. Will draft and circulate to members by the January 15th. The Annual Report Sub-committee will be Dr. Cina, Vice-Chairman Moran, Meza, McNicholas, and myself.

Recording of meeting minutes shall be delegated to the Secretary or a designee, Susan Dyer. The transition will begin on January 1st.

Adjournment

Motion for Adjournment - Roy

Seconded by Secretary Rizzo

No Discussion

Motion passed unanimously by committee

Next Meeting- Scheduled for January 16, 2015 - 11:00 am – back at CCMEO