

**Office of the Cook County Medical Examiner  
Advisory Committee Meeting | September 19, 2014  
Medical Examiner's Office | Lower Level Conference Room  
11:00AM**

**I. Attendance**

**Present:** *Reverend Vuanita Battle-Maze, Vitas Hospice; Dr. Enrique Beckmann, Chairman, ME Advisory Committee; Susan J. Dyer, Funeral Director; Elizabeth Ann Gorman, Cook County Commissioner; Sergeant Jason Moran, Cook County Sheriff's Office, Vice Chairman, ME Advisory Committee; Mark A. Rizzo, I.D.F.P.R, Secretary, ME Advisory Committee; Rabbi Moshe Wolf, Police Chaplain, CPD/CFD; Martha Martinez, BOA; James Sledge, Executive Officer, CCME; Nadine Jakubowski, Deputy Executive Officer, CCME; Dr. Ponni Arunkumar, Deputy Chief Medical Examiner of Cook County; Robert Meza, CCBOA; Frank Shuftan, BOA; Consuelo Alvarez, CCME; Steven P. Smith, CCME; George Marin, CCME*

**Absent:** *Daniel Gallagher, States Attorney; Spencer Leak Jr., Leak & Sons funeral Home; Isaac McCoy, President/CEO Urban Mosaic; Commander Eugene Roy, Chicago Police Department; Dr. Stephen Cina, Chief Medical Examiner of Cook County;*

**II. Call to Order**

**Roll Call**

MEAC meeting is called to order at 11:12 a.m. by Vice-Chairman J. Moran

M. Rizzo takes attendance, announces there is a quorum

**III. Minutes**

Minutes of July 18, 2014 are reviewed - J. Moran asks if anyone has any comments or amendments to these minutes – Amendments are brought forth – There is a call by J. Moran for a motion to accept July 18 minutes with amendments – Seconded by M. Wolf - MEAC accepts meeting minutes of July 18, 2014 with amendments/motion is passed unanimously – The amendments pertain to spelling errors and an attendance issue. Secretary Rizzo will amend the minutes and provide the document to the committee at the November meeting.

**IV. Reports from:**

**A. BOA – M. Martinez**

- County departments are all in full swing to finalize budget – Budget will be finalized within the next week  
The 1<sup>st</sup> of 2<sup>nd</sup> week of October the budget will be presented to the Board – then commissioner hearings will take place to approve, deny and discuss – Will be finalized before Thanksgiving holiday  
CCME Office budget is around 11million dollar mark  
*J. Moran – Do you expect testimony from this committee at that hearing?*  
*M. Martinez – It depends on if there are any questions that come up*  
*L. Gorman – How much of an increase is there in CCME budget?*  
*N. Jakubowski – Not much, we are about the same*  
*...ME budget included a few new positions this year to bring tox lab to NAME standards –*  
*Last year 26 new positions were added to the budget – M. Martinez*

Dr. Beckmann arrives and is given update of what has transpired thus far by J. Moran.

*Dr. Cina would come before the commissioners if necessary on October 9 or 10 – There are 4 or 5 public hearings scheduled before the budget is passed – E. Gorman*

Have minutes been reviewed? – E. Beckmann

Yes and a motion to accept them has been passed with amendments for spelling and an attendance issue  
– J. Moran

I would like to announce that at the College of America Pathologist's meeting on 9/6/14 Dr. Cina received a distinguished service award in recognition of his contribution

Motion to congratulate Dr. Cina for this award – J. Moran

Motion seconded by M. Rizzo

Motion passes unanimously

**B. CCME Office – J. Sledge**

- Current cooler count at 178 – 220 w/unidentified – kind of high
- O. Jones recently resigned – O. Jones duties have been split between George Marin and Steve Smith – We anticipate filling O. Jones' position soon
- Burial RFP is out on the street  
Urns are not to specifications – Language in bid does not specify what kind of urn
  
- Homewood is our current vendor – We are not using Homewood currently – Mt. Olivet stepped in to handle services – 10 adults 2 Fetal, Burial scheduled for next week 9/24/14 at 10:30  
We have had some issues with Homewood  
*- What else has come up with Homewood that is an issue? – J. Moran*  
*There are a number of cumulative issues with Homewood – J. Sledge*
  
- Cremations – As of today 89 cremations done since February – Pick up of cremains by family, 20  
*- Any issues with respect to cremations? – E. Beckmann*  
No issues with cremations all going smoothly  
*- Why do you think cooler count is high? – J. Moran*  
Making sure we have all paperwork for cremations delaying/moving slower  
*- This committee has brought up specifications with the language in the Cremation RFP yet the RFP went out with this language again – J. Moran*  
*Can these types of things be brought before the committee for review before an RFP goes out?*  
*- I agree with Mr. Moran that this was brought up at previous meetings regarding the urns that there was a gaff, a mistake in the (at that time, current) RFP – We were told that the language would be changed by Dr. Cina and it was not – E. Beckmann*  
*- Are this committee's recommendations taken?*

So we are clear, the RFP is mechanically out in the street already. If we have issues we can pull RFP back and amend with the changes proposed – or we can discuss this with Vendors specifically when meetings occur - J. Sledge

*From the standpoint of the ME office – Are these oversights that will be looked at and changed?*

*What is of concern to me is that something didn't go right with respect to “our” (CCME and MEAC) relationship*

*To insure that recommendations by this committee are accepted or implemented should we have CCME office follow up and advise of what has been done?*

If we can make changes we will but we have to check with procurement to see what we can do

*- In all fairness Dr. Cina is not here – as to what was said or not – the process by which Dr. Cina accepts or not - should be addressed when he is here*

*- MEAC makes recommendations to the Board of Commissioners not to Dr. Cina – then the Board does or does not do something with this*

*- Dr. Cina's practice has been to consider recommendations and accept – R. Meza*

*- It's clear recommendations were made and accepted by Dr. Cina – J. Moran*

*If he accepts recommendations, how do we know if they are implemented with CCME?*

*CCME Office performs some of its duties very well like determining Cause and Manner of Death. They have historically struggled with some other duties like burials, unidentified decedents, and storage/dignity issues. These are the issues we should be concentrating on.*

*It is up to CCME to utilize this board*

*It is upsetting that we made a suggestion, it was accepted, but wasn't changed in the RFP – J. Moran*

*When issues come up that impact operations at CCME Office...*

*- Discussed – Motion to Vote – Recommendations of the Board – CCME Office comes back with official response*

*- Frustrations of this committee*

*-Issue with meeting every other month – doesn't give time to vet properly – we have not been organized from the beginning – R. Meza*

*-At some point there should be a manner of how communications should be rolled up or out from MEAC to CCME and CCME to MEAC – R. Meza*

There is a \$50 fee for a cremation urn – Here we are today again with the cremation language – an “alternate container” is a cardboard box and this language was to be changed in next RFP and it was not – M. Rizzo

Dr. Cina’s comment to the board and the discussion came up with the type of urn – fancy glass urns – when we brought up the glass urns issue Dr. Cina said that he chose this type of urn because he had been at a service with brother or father – M. Rizzo

*How do we know?*

*Have a meeting with Dr. Cina (informal)*

*Is it inappropriate for this committee to review an RFP before it goes out? J. Moran*

*What is MEAC advising? – We don’t want to be micromanaging - L. Gorman*

*We need to redefine ourselves as to what our role is*

<i>Original Ordinance</i>		<i>To protect the dignity of deceased we are to be giving</i>
<i>New Ordinance</i>	}	<i>advice to CCME office</i>
<i>By-Laws</i>		

*We need to clarify from Board what we are here to do – What is our purview?*

*Section I of by-laws is clear and pulled directly from the ordinance*

*Committee was created in 1976 – no committee was ever appointed, you guys are the 1<sup>st</sup> committee ever – Toni Preckwinkle appointed this committee to advise because of issues within the CCME office*

*There are problems with “coming in” – Intake and “going out” – Outflow*

*By-laws are not worded appropriately – this committee has purview that impacted only the dignity of deceased – The Board needs to make clear the ordinance for the definition of our purview*

*Reasonable common sense – is not an issue – This will all be worked out when Dr. Cina meets with vendors and reasonability will take over*

*Do we have jurisdiction over the operations of the CCME office? And what are they? If they are not clearly defined, we will achieve nothing*

*Regarding comments by Mr. Meza that these 2 issues do not go to the dignity of the deceased – at the end of 2 years we have to dispose of the cremains (glass urns or cardboard boxes) and they will be piled up after 2 years and this does go to the dignity of deceased*

**Side note:**

There are 2 burials coming up – I have a concern – We are asking for donations of services and equipment from funeral homes, but Catholic cemeteries is being reimbursed for their services – This will be an issue, to get volunteers, if only some participants are being paid – M. Rizzo

*We need to get a suggestion from a state’s attorney – What is our actual role? What are expectations? Get overall opinion from State’s Attorney –*

*We have to know what questions to ask/present*

*- Do we have responsibility to oversee operations of CCME office?*

*- To look at policy and procedures?*

*- Operational responsibility?*

*- Are we restricted to Advisory committee to the board with only the respect to dignity of deceased?*

*How do we make appropriate recommendations to the Board of Commissioners if we are unaware if our advice to CCME Office is not taken? Or if we don't see the RFP? – J. Moran*

*If we see ourselves as the keepers of the CCME office – It is not our role to be keepers of the CCME office – Our role is to advise the board based on what information we receive from CCME office*

*We cannot do the job without clear information on operations*

*We are to be helpful when asked, not to take a proactive role of CCME operations – If their decisions have negative impact then we go to board and let them know we have advised CCME office this way and they did not follow – either intentionally or as an oversight*

*When it applies to the historical problems here I believe we should be presented with an RFP or other operational issue. Again, how do we make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners if we are not informed of what is happening?*

*S. Dyer reads 2<sup>nd</sup> RFP and N. Jakubowski says it has been removed – N. Jakubowski will review this with S. Dyer*

*L. Gorman will compose a letter, review and send to the State's Attorney's Office.*

*November 21<sup>st</sup> meeting will be the week before Thanksgiving? – Can we meet at the county building due to possible budget talks? – Public notice of meeting change in location needs to be posted 1 month in advance*

## **V. New Business**

- A.** Dr. Cina had explained – Regarding struggle with apparatus to locate Next of Kin – Sheriff's Office has helped train 6 to 7 people at CCME Office to use Accurant They can use intelligence analyst to assist CCME to a certain degree  
--- This has changed our process – P. Arunkumar

We received the cremation policy flow chart and will discuss at next meeting – E. Beckmann Subcommittee will review (PUT ON AGENDA) and bring up at next meeting

## **VI. Old Business**

### **A. Minutes**

What did you see in other minutes? Who takes them? Are they doing it themselves? – L. Gorman Minutes should include Motions, Topics of discussion

Minutes were very late this time – is this what we should expect? - this will not be the norm – minute taker Connie recently had surgery – this was reason for lateness of minutes

Expectations of minute taking and recording by hand?

**VII. Adjournment**

*Motion called to adjourn meeting – L. Gorman*

*Second the motion – M. Rizzo*

*Committee votes in favor of adjourning meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m.*

*Next Meeting- Scheduled for November 21, 2014*