



Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

Meeting Date: March 20, 2012

Prepared By/Phone Number: Sarah Scott/854-6885

Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head: Danny Hobby

Commissioners Court Sponsor: County Judge Samuel T. Biscoe

AGENDA LANGUAGE:

CONSIDER AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION REGARDING THE FOLLOWING FEE CHANGES AND INFORMATION LETTER FOR THE TRAVIS COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE:

- A. AN INCREASE IN AUTOPSY FEES;**
- B. A REVISED FEE SCHEDULE; AND**
- C. AN INFORMATION LETTER TO COUNTIES THAT CONTRACT WITH TRAVIS COUNTY FOR AUTOPSY SERVICES.**

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST AND ATTACHMENTS:

This past November Crime Lab Design (CLD) Consultants testified before Commissioners Court on the subject of the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office (TCMEO), its growing caseload and many constraints on operations. CLD recommendations included charging more for autopsies, from \$2,300.00 per autopsy to \$2,600.00 per autopsy, and increasing per hour for testimony on out-of-county cases, from \$100.00 per hour to \$121.00 per hour. TCMEO also recommends a fee increase for an out-of-county external exam, from \$800.00 to \$900.00. The current fees have not been changed since 2007. Please see attached letter and fee schedule for more detail and description.

Also attached is an information letter to counties that contract with Travis County for autopsy services. It is important that we inform our contract counties of these fee changes and the effective date for them.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

TCMEO management staff and Emergency Services recommend approval of an increase in autopsy fees; a revised fee schedule; and an information letter to counties that contract with Travis County for autopsy services. The Planning and Budget Office (PBO) has reviewed the CLD calculations and concur that an increase is warranted.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

These fee changes are necessary due to the amount of time and resources needed to provide the various services, along with a growing caseload.

FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:

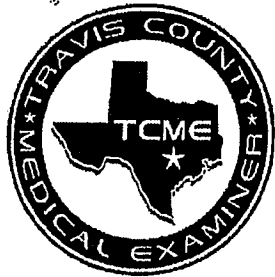
PBO and the Auditor's Office have estimated that there would be an increase in revenue of \$39,000.00 for the remainder of FY12 by increasing the out-of-county fees and an increase of \$220,000.00 for FY13. Based on past experience, there should be a short-term decline in the number of out-of-county autopsies as a result of the fee changes.

REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:

Daniel Bradford, County Attorney's Office, 854-9513

Katie Petersen, PBO, 854-9346

David Jungerman, Auditor's Office, 854-7829



**TRAVIS COUNTY OFFICE
OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER**

1213 Sabine Street PO Box 1748 Austin, TX 78767
Tel: (512) 854-9599 Fax: (512) 854-9044
www.co.travis.tx.us/medical_examiner

DAVID DOLINAK, MD
Diplomate of American Board of Pathology
CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

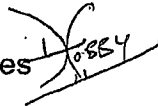
SATISH CHUNDRU, DO
Diplomate of American Board of Pathology
DEPUTY CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

KENDALL CROWNS, MD
Diplomate of American Board of Pathology
DEPUTY MEDICAL EXAMINER

LEISHA WOOD, MD
Diplomate of American Board of Pathology
DEPUTY MEDICAL EXAMINER

VICKIE WILLOUGHBY, DO
Diplomate of American Board of Pathology
DEPUTY MEDICAL EXAMINER

TO: Travis County Commissioners Court

THROUGH: Danny Hobby, County Executive, Emergency Services 

FROM: David Dolinak, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner

DATE: March 15, 2012

IN RE: Increased Charges for Interlocal Autopsies and Other Fees of the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office

On November 8, 2011, the Crime Lab Design (CLD) Consultants testified before this Court on the subject of the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office (TCMEO), its growing caseload and its many constraints on operations.

One of the Crime Lab Design Consultants' recommendations to the Commissioners Court was that the TCMEO begin charging more for autopsies. They recommended a fee increase from \$2,300 per autopsy to \$2,600 per autopsy. CLD also recommended an increase to \$121 per hour for testimony on out-of-county cases from \$100 per hour. The Travis County Medical Examiner's Office also recommends a fee increase to \$900 for an out-of-county external exam from \$800. (This is approximately a 13% increase in the fee, the same as the percentage increase in the fee for out-of-county autopsies.) This Court has previously received the executive summary of CLD which contained the recommendation of the increased fees.

The Planning and Budget Office (PBO) has reviewed the CLD calculations and concur that an increase is warranted. The current fees have not been changed since 2007. From a recalculation of the office's salaries (which increase periodically and also reflect the addition of another investigator and a part-time records assistant), operating expenses, and the cost of a contract histologist (which was not factored into the original calculations for the 2007 fee), the new fees are justified.

PBO and the Auditor's Office have estimated that there would be an increase in revenue of \$39,000 for the remainder of FY 2012 by increasing the out-of-county interlocal fees and an increase of \$220,000 for FY 2013. (Out-of-

autopsies are trending downward, and will experience a short-term decline in frequency with the fee increase.)

Attached to this memorandum is a schedule of fees of the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office. Other fees will remain the same.

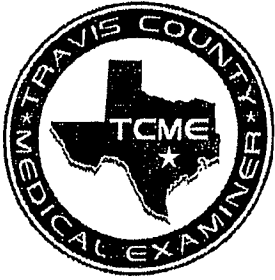
Thank you for your consideration of this matter and please let us know if you need additional information.

TRAVIS COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER

REVENUE PROPOSAL 2012

Service	Description	Charge	Application	Statutory Authority
Reports	Autopsy, Narrative	\$10.00 for autopsy report (includes toxicology) (no change)	Everyone except JPs, interagency entities, Travis County legal next of kin	Health and Safety Code Section 671.013(c)(1) Up to \$25 based on actual costs
Certified Reports	Autopsy, Narrative	\$5.00 for certification of each request (no change)	Same as above	Same as above
Notarization	Notarization of legal documents	\$5.00 for notarization of each document (no change)	Same as above	Government Code Section 406.024 Up to \$6 for each document
Copy charge/page paper	If not included in other charges	\$.10 (no charge)(will estimate if charge over \$40.)	Everyone	Government Code Section 552.231(a)(2)(B) Amount reasonably includes all costs of copying, including costs of materials, labor, and overhead if more than 50 pages but if 50 or fewer pages of paper records, amount may not include costs materials, labor, or overhead, and is limited to the charge for each page of the paper record that is photocopied. Open Records estimate needed if charge is over \$40.

Service	Description	Charge	Application	Statutory Authority
Research/Statistical Reports/Questionnaires	Varies depending on requests	\$28.50 per hour programming time (will estimate if charge over \$40) (no charge)	Everyone	Government Code Section 552.231(a)(3)(B) Open records estimate needed if charge is over \$40
Reproducing 35 mm photos	35 mm photos	Actual costs	Everyone	Health and Safety Code Section 671.013(c)(2) Fee set by Commissioners Court based on actual cost of reproduction, including the reasonable cost of overhead
Electronic Digital Images	CD - ROM	\$3.00 per disk	Everyone except interagency entities, JPs	1 TAC Section 70.3(b)(2)(G)
Out of County Autopsy		\$2,600 (\$300 increase)	PA Cases	To be addressed through the interlocal agreements
Out of County External Examination		\$900 (\$100 increase)	PA Cases	To be addressed through the interlocal agreements
Out of County Court Testimony		\$121/hour, including travel time (minimum of 3 hours) (\$21 increase)	PA Cases	To be addressed through the interlocal agreements
Shipping Costs		Actual costs		1 TAC Section 70.3(j)
Copy of radiographs		Actual costs	Everyone, except interagency entities, JPs	Health and Safety Code Section 671.013(c)(2) Fee set by Commissioners Court based on actual cost of reproduction, including the reasonable cost of overhead.



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MEMO TO: County Judges
County Attorneys

FROM: David Dolinak, M.D.
Chief Medical Examiner

IN RE: Out-of-County Fee Increases

DATE: March 21, 2012

On November 8, 2011, the Crime Lab Design (CLD) Consultants testified before the Travis County Commissioners Court on the subject of the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office (TCMEO), its growing caseload and its many constraints for operations.

One of the Crime Lab Design Consultants' recommendations to the Commissioners Court was that the TCMEO begin charging more for out-of-county autopsies. They recommended a fee increase from \$2,300 per autopsy to \$2,600 per autopsy. Fees for external exams would increase from \$800 to \$900. Fees for testimony were recommended to increase from \$100 an hour, including travel time (with a minimum of three hours), to \$121 an hour, including travel time (with a minimum of three hours).

The Travis County Office of Planning and Budget reviewed the CLD calculations and concurred that an increase was warranted. The current fees have not been changed since 2007.

Based on this analysis, the TCMEO asked the Commissioners Court to approve an increase in out-of-county autopsy fees from \$2,300 to \$2,600; external exam fees from \$800 to \$900; and fees for testimony from \$100 an hour to \$121 an hour, including travel time (with a minimum of three hours). On March 20, 2012, Court ordered that the TCMEO increase the out-of-county fees as specified above, effective June 1, 2012. The Court also reaffirmed fees for administrative services, including reports, copying, printing photographs, etc. These administrative fees for the most part will not apply to out-of-county offices. Any case related information (reports, photographs, x-rays, shipping) will not be charged. They are included in the autopsy fee.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Sarah Scott, Chief Administrative Officer, at sarah.scott@co.travis.tx.us or (512) 854-6995.