



Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

Meeting Date: August 12, 2014

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

Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head: David Dolinak, M.D.

Commissioners Court Sponsor: County Judge Samuel T. Biscoe

AGENDA LANGUAGE:

CONSIDER AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION REGARDING A FOUR-POINT TRANSITION PLAN FOR THE TRAVIS COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE:

- A. Appointment of Chief Medical Examiner on an interim basis**
- B. Approval of temporary assignment pay for two staff members**
- C. Approval of Timetable for search of new Chief Medical Examiner**
- D. Appoint two Court members to serve on the search committee**

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST AND ATTACHMENTS:

On June 25, 2014, Dr. David Dolinak submitted his resignation as Travis County Chief Medical Examiner effective the end of Monday, August 18, 2014. After the resignation had been announced staff began planning steps towards establishing new leadership for the Office; appropriate pay adjustments for affected staff; the development of a hiring search timetable; and the establishment of a hiring process search committee.

An updated job description for the Chief Medical Examiner was approved by the Commissioners Court on July 22, 2014, and the opening was posted on job search websites beginning on July 23, 2014.

Please see the attached memorandum for a detailed description of the four-point planning steps and the requested consideration and action by the Court.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

TCMEO management staff and Emergency Services recommend approval of this Transition Plan.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

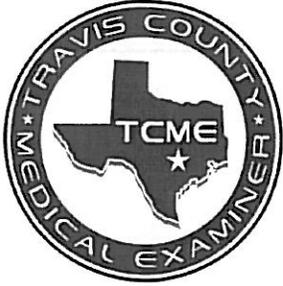
It is important to maintain the appropriate levels of management and the appropriate workload requirements at the Medical Examiner's Office, so this Transition Plan will allow a timely completion in the hiring of a new Chief Medical Examiner and allow workload issues to be eased in an efficient manner.

FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Payment for temporary assignment pay adjustments will come from existing department savings or if needed from a budget adjustment from allocated reserves.

REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:

Daniel Bradford, County Attorney's Office, 854-9513
Katie Peterson, PBO, 854-9346
Harve Franklin, HRMD, 854-4824
Kapp Schwebke, Audit, 854-6628



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

KATHERINE S. CALLAHAN, M.D.
Diplomate of American Board of Pathology
DEPUTY MEDICAL EXAMINER

MEMORANDUM

TO: Travis County Commissioners Court

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

IN RE: Transition Plan for the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office

DATE: August 5, 2014

On June 25, 2014, I submitted my resignation as Travis County Chief Medical Examiner effective the end of Monday, August 18, 2014. After the resignation had been announced to the Medical Examiner staff on June 26, 2014, planning steps began towards establishing new leadership for the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office; appropriate pay adjustments for affected staff; the development of a hiring search timetable; and the establishment of a hiring process search committee. An updated job description for the Chief Medical Examiner was approved by the Commissioners Court on July 22, 2014, and the opening was posted on job search websites beginning on July 23, 2014.

As events developed, it became clear that there was a need to return to the Commissioners Court with a full transition plan requiring approval. Therefore, approval of the following four-point plan is being requested:

1. Appointment of Deputy Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Satish Chundru, effective the beginning of August 19, 2014, to serve as the Chief Medical Examiner on an interim basis with full powers to act as the Chief Medical Examiner under Article 49.25 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure;
2. Approval of Deputy Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Satish Chundru and Sarah Scott, Chief Administrative Officer, to receive 10% "temporary

assignment pay” adjustment effective August 19, 2014, to be continued until the start of a new permanent Chief Medical Examiner of the County;

3. Approval of the “Search for the New Chief Medical Examiner Timetable (with Options)” for a nation-wide search (see attachment); and
4. Appoint two Court members to serve on the search committee along with other Travis County government representatives and representatives from the Central Texas medical community.

Each of the items above is discussed below.

- Appointment of Deputy Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Satish Chundru as Chief Medical Examiner on an Interim Basis effective the beginning of August 19, 2014.

Dr. Satish Chundru is a board-certified forensic pathologist who has been with the Travis County Medical Examiner’s Office since 2008. He has served under me as Deputy Chief Medical Examiner during most of that time period. When I have been unavailable, Dr. Chundru has acted in my stead. It is my recommendation that Dr. Chundru be Chief Medical Examiner on an interim basis upon my departure. The matter has been reviewed by the County Attorneys’ Office and found to be fully in accordance with Texas law.

- Dr. Satish Chundru, as Chief Medical Examiner on an interim basis, and Sarah Scott, Chief Administrative Officer, to receive a 10% temporary assignment pay” adjustment for assuming additional duties.

It is accepted within County government that when individuals assume greater duties on a temporary basis, they may be granted “temporary assignment pay” for the duration. Dr. Chundru’s duties will increase appreciably. In addition to his regular autopsy routine as his teaching duties as Deputy Chief Medical Examiner, he will have the full powers of the Chief Medical Examiner under Article 49.25 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure. He will have the final authority over the entire office, subject to the authority of the Commissioners Court. It will be up to Dr. Chundru to lead the office in the interim until a new permanent Chief Medical Examiner takes the lead of office. The extra responsibility deserves extra compensation.

Sarah Scott, J.D., has served as the Chief Administrative Officer of the Travis County Medical Examiner’s since January 4, 2010. Since receiving notice of Dr. Dolinak’s intent to resign his position, Ms. Scott’s ordinary duties, which include

supervision of much of the office (including the investigators, the autopsy techs, the records department, the administrative staff) and budgetary and personnel matters, have increased significantly. Ms. Scott assisted in the updating of the Chief Medical Examiner job description. She has recommended the inclusion of certain individuals on the transition team. She has continued to assist in the planning of a 50,000 square foot new medical examiner facility to be constructed at 7815 Springdale Road. She has helped identify tasks for the transition team and helped plan the search for the new Chief Medical Examiner.

Ms. Scott has unique expertise in the administration of medical examiner's offices and it is seen as necessary to the smooth transition of the office to function under a new permanent chief for Ms. Scott to continue her ordinary and extraordinary activities during the interim. She will advise Dr. Chundru as he assumes the reigns of the office and provide the necessary support to him to function effectively as the office searches for a new permanent chief medical examiner. Ms. Scott deserves extra compensation for her increased role.

The Planning and Budget Office (PBO) has reviewed the salary savings for the department. At this time, PBO will monitor the department's budget and determine whether a budget adjustment from the Allocated Reserve is necessary to cover any temporary assignment pay. TCMEO has generated temporary salary savings from turnover of investigation and autopsy tech positions and those savings will likely be adequate to cover temporary pay increases for the two staff members for the remainder of the fiscal year. PBO will adjust the department's year end projections accordingly and will recommend TCMEO request Allocated Reserve funding in September only if the department's salary savings are insufficient to cover the increases for the remainder of FY 2014. Additional funding from Allocated Reserve may be necessary in FY 2015.

- Approval of "Search for New Chief Medical Examiner Timetable (with Options)" for the nation-wide search.

The fact that a search committee for a nation-wide search is formed is not a reflection on any in-house candidates who may apply for Chief Medical Examiner position. Indeed, all are encouraged to apply. It is instead a reflection of the importance of the position, which encompasses many factors, including the population growth of Travis County; the importance of Austin in the Central Texas region, the state of Texas, and the nation; the creation of a new medical school at the University of Texas at Austin; and the fact that the office currently has interlocal contracts with 42 other counties outside Travis County to provide autopsy services. Many of the other counties are also experiencing rapid population growth. Since I began work in Travis County, the staff has helped institute many improvements to the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office; it is incumbent on Travis County to continue the upward trajectory of the office.

Travis County must assure its residents and the other users of its forensic services that the best possible candidate has been recruited and employed.

On Monday, July 7, 2014, Danny Hobby (County Executive for Emergency Services), I (Chief Medical Examiner), and Sarah Scott (Chief Administrative Officer) met with Todd Osburn (Compensation Manager) and Harve Franklin (Human Resources Specialist Senior) of the Human Resources Management Department (HRMD). Harve Franklin had already developed a tentative timetable for conducting a search. A second timetable that anticipates receiving a sufficient number of qualified applicants after the first 30 day posting period for the position has been drawn up in draft form and attached. The thirty days will conclude August 25, 2014.

- Appoint two Court members to serve on the search committee.

In 2006, I was recruited to come to Austin to serve as the permanent Chief Medical Examiner. Both Judge Biscoe and Commissioner Gomez have served continuously on the Court since 2005 and have interested themselves in the functioning of the office. Both Judge Biscoe and Commissioner Gomez have indicated they are willing to serve on the search committee.

To avoid any form of conflict with the intent and operation of Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code (the "Open Meetings Act") or any other common law doctrine, the appointment of both Judge Biscoe and Commissioner Gomez should be approved by the full Commissioners Court.

Other search committee members are anticipated to be the County Executive for Emergency Services (who customarily advises the office), the Chief Administrative Officer of the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office, a representative from County government knowledgeable about budgetary matters, an attorney from the County Attorney's Office, and two physicians from the Central Texas medical community (one a pediatrician, because of the office's important role in detecting the cause of childhood fatalities, and the other a pathologist skilled in hospital autopsies).

cc: Danny Hobby
County Executive for Emergency Services

Daniel Bradford
County Attorney's Office

Commissioners Court
Transition Plan.
August 5, 2014

Todd Osburn
Compensation Specialist HRMD

Katie Gibson
Budget Analyst Senior
Planning and Budget Committee

Search for New Chief Medical Examiner Timetable

2014

Dates	2014 Project Plan for Search for Permanent Chief Medical Examiner	Assigned To
June 26 – July 11*	Position Description Review and Changes Finalized	ME Office State, HRMD (Todd Osburn)
July 22*	Position Description finalized and Present to Court for Approval	HRMD (Todd Osburn)
Option A – Sufficient Number of Qualified Candidates Provide Applications by August 25, 2014		
July 23*	Option A – First Position Announcement Posted (30 day; July 23 – August 25, 2014)	HRMD (Harve Franklin)
August 25	First Application Deadline	
August 27	First MQ Application Screen Complete	HRMD (Harve Franklin)
September 4	First Preferred Qualifications Application Screen Complete	Search Committee
September 9 – 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone/Skype Screening Interview for Top 10 Candidates • Selection of Top 5 Candidates for On Site Interviews 	Search Committee
If field of candidates is not deemed adequate during the period of interviewing September 9 - 12, the search will be reopened. See Option B.		
September 23	Agenda Item Approving Estimate Candidates Travel Expenses; to be Approved by Commissioners Court (Budget Rule 14)	County Executive for Emergency Services, Commissioners Court
September 28	Top 5 Candidates Field Trip to Office; Interview by Search Committee	Search Committee; ME Office Staff
September 29 (a.m.)	Recommendations Received by Search Committee from ME Office Staff to Committee; Selection of Top 3 Finalists	Selection Committee
September 29 (p.m.)	Interview of Top 3 Finalists	Commissioners Court
September 30 – October 3	Complete Reference and Background Check on Finalists	HRMD (Harve Franklin and Claudia Garcia)
October 6 – 8	Offer Terms Negotiated	To Be Determined
October 9 – 31	Acceptance of Candidate; Installation of Permanent Chief: Appointment to Office, Taking of Oath of Office, Assumption of Duties at ME's Office.	Commissioners Court, New Chief Medical Examiner
Option B. Field of Candidates Reviewed September 9 – 12 Deemed Inadequate, Search Reopened		
September 15	Option B – Second Position Announcement Posted (30 Day; September 15 – October 15, 2014)	HRMD (Harve Franklin)
October 16	Second Application Deadline	

Search for New Chief Medical Examiner Timetable

2014

Dates	2014 Project Plan for Search for Permanent Chief Medical Examiner	Assigned To
October 20	Second MQ Application Screen Complete	HRMD (Harve Franklin)
October 23	Second Preferred Qualifications Application Screen Complete	Search Committee
October 27 – 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone/Skype Screening Interview for Top 10 Candidates • Selection of Top 5 Candidates for On Site Interviews 	Search Committee
November 11	Agenda Item Approving Estimate Candidates Travel Expenses; to be Approved by Commissioners Court (Budget Rule 14)	County Executive for Emergency Services, Commissioners Court
November 18	Top 5 Candidates Field Trip to Office; Interview by Search Committee	Search Committee; ME Office Staff
November 19 (a.m.)	Recommendations Received by Search Committee from ME Office Staff to Committee; Selection of Top 3 Finalists	Selection Committee
November 19 (p.m.)	Interview of Top 3 Finalists	Commissioners Court
November 20 - 25	Complete Reference and Background Check on Finalists	HRMD (Harve Franklin and Claudia Garcia)
December 1 - 3	Offer Terms Negotiated	To Be Determined
December 4 - 31	Acceptance of Candidate; Installation of Permanent Chief; Appointment to Office, Taking of Oath of Office, Assumption of Duties at ME's Office.	Commissioners Court, New Chief Medical Examiner

*Indicates already completed tasks.