

Tennessee Medical Examiner Advisory Council
Friday, July 12, 2019, 12:03 P.M. – 12:39 P.M. CST

MEMBERS	REPRESENTATION	STATUS
Benjamin Figura, Ph.D.	Admin Regional Forensic Center (West)	Telephonic
Bob Batson	Licensed Funeral Director	Present
Adele Lewis, M.D.	State Chief Medical Examiner	Present
Darinka Mileusnic, M.D., Ph.D.	Forensic Pathologist Forensic Center	Telephonic
Honorable Amy Weirich	District Attorney General	Telephonic
Tony R. Emison, M.D.	County Medical Examiner (West TN)	Not Present
Josh Melton	TBI	Present
Ed Miller, J.D.	District Public Defender	Not Present
Lorraine MacDonald, M.D.	County Medical Examiner (Middle TN)	Not Present
Matrina Schmidt, M.D.	Forensic Pathologist Forensic Center	Telephonic
Feng Li, M.D., Ph.D., J.D.	Forensic Pathologist Forensic Center	Present
James Metcalfe, M.D.	Forensic Pathologist Forensic Center	Present
Marco Ross, M.D.	Forensic Pathologist Forensic Center	Telephonic
David D. Darden, D.O., M.P.H.	County Medical Examiner (East TN)	Present
Mayor Jake Bynum	Weakley County Mayor	Present
Joey Hensley, M.D.	Tennessee Senate	Telephonic
NON-MEMBERS	REPRESENTATION	STATUS
Margaret A. Hyder, M.A.	Deputy Director	Present
Denise Martin, M.C.J, J.D., ABMDI-D	State Medicolegal Death Investigator	Present
GUESTS	REPRESENTATION	STATUS
Amy Hawes, M.D.	Knox Regional Forensic Center	Telephonic

The meeting was called to order at 12:03 P.M. on Friday, July 12, 2019 in Conference Room A, 5th Floor, Andrew Johnson Tower.

12:03 P.M. **1. Roll Call and Voting**

Dr. Figura welcomed the council, apologized for not being able to attend the council meeting in-person, and requested introductions from each member, their names and representations. All council members were present in-person or telephonic, except for Dr. Tony Emison, Dr. Lorraine MacDonald, and Public Defender Ed Miller. Mayor Bynum moved to approve the minutes from July 12, 2019, which were electronically distributed prior to the meeting, Dr. Lewis seconded the motion and the minutes were approved by unanimous vote of “Aye.”

12:06 P.M. **2. Old Business:**

Dr. Figura advised the council that the search for a new state chief medical examiner resulted in two applicants, and the council was advised by Dr. Morgan McDonald that Dr. Lewis was hired as the new state chief effective July 1, 2019. Dr. Figura congratulated Dr. Lewis on her new appointment. Dr. Figura asked if any members of the council had anything they’d like to mention in regards to Dr. Lewis’ appointment, then went on to advise the council the statutory responsibility for reviewing and recommending appointment for the state chief position, and they did have the opportunity to do so. Dr. Figura asked Dr. Lewis if she knew the status of the deputy state chief position. Dr. Lewis advised the council that Dr. Amy Hawes had been appointed as the deputy state chief medical examiner, and would start the role November 1st. Dr. Figura asked Dr. Lewis if the deputy appointment was something that the department would

notify the council of and allow the council the opportunity to review. Dr. Lewis agreed the department would notify the council. Dr. Mileusnic asked if the statute had ever been officially changed, with respect to “deputies,” and if not suggested that the council change the statute to reflect what the state actually has, in regards to one deputy. Dr. Lewis agreed with Dr. Mileusnic that the part of code referring to deputies could be removed. Dr. Mileusnic asked that this issue be put on the agenda for the council to discuss for the next legislative cycle. Dr. Figura agreed that sections of the code may be a little out of sync with each other.

12:11 P.M. **3. OSCME Update:**

Dr. Figura asked Dr. Lewis if she would provide the council with an update. Dr. Lewis advised the council she had a presentation to go over all the projects the office is currently involved in.

- Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Death Investigation Training – Death Investigation 101 – FY18-19 JAG trainings are complete. FY19-20 planned with first training at Montgomery Bell State Park. DI 101 recently delivered to Sevier, McNairy, and Chester Counties, with requests for training from White, Putnam, and Moore Counties.
- Opioid Grant Funds – Many opioid grant funds have been obtained for the four forensic centers that contract with the state, though not all the funds are being claimed. The OSCME is awaiting invoices from the centers. CoAg grant was extended until November. Memphis and FMMS still had money left to claim.
- TNVDRS – Four year grant. MOU process complete to work with Davidson and Shelby Counties. Position for additional abstractor. Dr. Lewis advised FMMS has been extremely helpful cooperating with the OSCME.
- Case Management System – The office has been creating and developing a case management system for the county medical examiners and regional forensic centers. The office obtained a project manager and having weekly meetings with the vendor.
- Legislative Efforts – “Suicide Bill” was amended to include peer review panel. MEAC added two members of legislature, Senator Hensley was appointed to MEAC July 9, 2019. MEAC was extended.
- Annual Report, MEAC report, Mass Fatality Plan, and Quarterly newsletter are all available online.

Dr. Mileusnic asked about the form to reapply for appointment to MEAC. Dr. Lewis advised the site the form was on has been under construction, so applications may be sent to Ms. Hyder. Dr. Figura asked Dr. Lewis if there was a timeline for the case management system. Dr. Lewis advised that the process is ongoing and takes time, because the office wants to make sure the system is done correctly.

12:24 P.M. **4. Opioids**

Dr. Figura asked if there were any representatives of the FBI on the line, then explained that John Lott had put him in touch with East Tennessee agents that wanted to discuss some of the coordination they’ve done in the east with drug related deaths. Dr. Lewis advised that there appeared to be more callers on the line than those who introduced themselves, and asked for others who joined late to identify themselves. Dr. Schmidt, Dr. Marco Ross, Amy Weirich and Senator Hensley identified themselves. Dr. Darden advised that he’d had the DEA agent out of Atlanta contacted him out of Atlanta on a couple cases. Dr. Figura asked Dr. Mileusnic if she was aware of the FBI coordination. Dr. Mileusnic advised FBI and ARPO had been working extensively with Dr. Hawes on quite a few cases. Dr. Hawes advised to the council that ARPO is an FBI led task force specifically targeting pharmaceutical opioid overdose deaths, and it is her understanding that ARPO is looking for partners to work with in some of the smaller counties

where people are dying from pharmaceutical opioid overdoses and those deaths are not getting reported, or the medical examiner is not ordering autopsies on those cases. Dr. Mileusnic advised that maps of Tennessee colored in for amount of overdose deaths have many counties completely white, meaning there are no overdoses in those counties, which simply is not true. Dr. Mileusnic mentioned their annual report this year that showed Anderson County actually had a decrease in overdoses. Dr. Figura advised the council he will reach back out to the FBI, because it does seem there is underreporting of overdose deaths statewide.

12:27 P.M. **5. New Business**

Dr. Figura asked the council if any members had new business they would like to bring up. Council members did not have any comment. Dr. Figura advised he would still like to discuss a mass fatality call center at future meetings. Dr. Mileusnic asked if Senator Hensley was on the phone when the discussion about deputies had taken place, and asked if he could provide a timeline to start working on amending the statute. Senator Hensley asked for clarification. Dr. Figura advised the issues with the statute being out of sync, and the need to remove parts of the statute that do not sync with other parts of the statute. Senator Hensley advised the council that “legislative session starts in January, but deciding what you want to do in the fall would be the best time to decide what to do.” Dr. Mileusnic advised that we would need to have something ready by the next council meeting. Senator Hensley agreed. Dr. Figura advised the issue will be on the agenda for the October meeting, and all the information on the books right now would be distributed for review prior to the next meeting. Senator Hensley advised he should be at the next meeting in person. Dr. Figura welcomed Senator Hensley to the council.

12:31 P.M. **6. Council Wrap-Up:**

Dr. Darden advised the council his concerns with the FBI being involved with opioids instead of the DEA, possibly resulting in a turf battle. Dr. Mileusnic advised she did not believe there was an issue. Dr. Hawes agreed that there was not a turf war, just a different branch using information collected by the DEA. Josh Melton, with TBI, advised the council that he would like the council to think about ways the TBI can do better, or suggestions from the council. Dr. Mileusnic advised that she could provide Mr. Melton with many suggestions, and the council should address this at the next meeting. Mr. Melton asked for any questions or suggestions to be prepared prior to the next council meeting. Council members were advised they could send any comments or suggestions to Ms. Hyder and she would forward them to Mr. Melton. Dr. Darden advised the delay from the TBI lab was a real issue, but he was sure the delay probably has to do with funding. Dr. Figura advised that for the next meeting it may be equally helpful to get updates from the regional center, as well as the OSCME update. Dr. Figura gave the example that Memphis just recently received an NIJ grant, which resulted in two fellow positions. Dr. Figura asked if any of the centers have anything they’d like to mention for this meeting, with no suggestions, Dr. Figura advised he would put updates on the next meeting agenda.

- October 11, 2019 – 12:00 P.M. CST