

**Office of the Cook County Medical Examiner
Advisory Committee Meeting - July 17, 2015
CCME Office | Lower Level Conference Room| 11:00am**

Attendance

Present: Dr. Enrique Beckmann, *Chairman*; Detective Sergeant Jason Moran, *Cook County Sheriff's Office - Vice Chairman*; Mark A. Rizzo, *Licensed Funeral Director- Secretary*; Susan Dyer, *Funeral Director*; Spencer Leak, Jr., *Funeral Director*; Deputy Chief Eugene Roy, *Chicago Police Department*; Rabbi Moshe Wolf, *Police Chaplain-CPD/CFD*; Vuanita Battle-Maze, *Vitas Hospice*; Daniel Gallagher, *Cook County State's Attorney's Office*

Absent: Isaac McCoy, *President/CEO Urban Mosaic*; Elizabeth Gorman, *Cook County Commissioner*

Guests Present: Dr. Stephen Cina, *Chief Medical Examiner*; Dr. Ponni Arunkumar, *Deputy Chief Medical Examiner*; Nadine Jakubowski, *Deputy Executive Officer*; Lizveth Mendez, *CCBOA*; Robert Meza, *CCBOA*; Steven P. Smith, *CCME*; Kevin McNicholas, *CCBOA*; Eric Wong, *Deputy Chief of Staff for President Preckwinkle*

Call to Order/Roll Call

MEAC meeting called to order at **11:01 a.m.** by Chairman Beckmann
Secretary Rizzo does roll call and announces there is a quorum

Introductions

Eric Wong, *Deputy Chief of Staff for President Preckwinkle*
No Public in attendance

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of April 17, 2015 are reviewed by committee
Motion to approve by Rabbi Wolf
Motion seconded by Roy
Discussion about minor amendments
Motion to approve minutes with amendments passed unanimously by committee

Reports

Chairman

- Chairman Beckmann defers to Dr. Cina and Robert Meza for brief notification about proposed amendments to CCME Ordinance

Bureau of Administration

- DC Mendez informs committee that Commissioner Elizabeth Gorman has resigned from the Cook County Board as of July 13, 2015

CCMEO

- Dr. Cina

- two (2) new Fellows and filled two (2) Assistant ME vacancies. There is one (1) vacancy in toxicology as Chief Toxicologist Dr. Wagner has left due to personal issues. One of our Assistant ME's is from Dade County whom Dr. Cina has worked with previously.
- There is a N.A.M.E. pre-inspection for our accreditation which will keep us on track for full accreditation by January 2016.
- Changes to CCMEO ordinances are due downtown for the September Board of Commissioners Meeting. We are working with CCBOA for new ideas. We are attempting to streamline our indigent issues by vetting them for cremation by lifting the 90-day hold, as DHS is insolvent. We will not be holding DHS cases, as we know there are no funds currently to provide for burial. The CCMEO will be declaring them indigent, hence, eligible for cremation. Another proposed ordinance change will be to hold cremated remains for only one year rather than the current two-year hold.
- We will be renovating our conference room by November 2015 which will include Wi Fi, and audio/video capabilities for presentations.
- Cooler census currently is at 165. This includes 50-60 homicides and 20 unidentified. There are 11 ready for release. Our count peaked to 205 at the end of June 2015.
- Cremations continue with family authorizations. Less than 30% of cremated remains are being picked up by family members. Burial of unidentified remains was completed a couple of month back with the assistance of Malcolm X School of Mortuary Science.

Subcommittee (s)

Cremation

-Vice-Chairman Moran (Chair of Cremation Subcommittee)

Vice-Chairman Moran informs the committee that the subcommittee has been continually reviewing the CCMEO cremation policy over the last year as it has changed several times due to it being a brand new process. The committee chose to make four (4) recommendations, as opposed to, commenting on the entire policy. An example of this is the word "cremated remains" being used in some parts of the policy and the word "cremains" being used in other parts. The term should be consistent throughout the document and always be "cremated remains". The four (4) recommendations are...

- 1.) All decedents being cremated are identified by competent authority prior to cremation. Procedures are put in place to ensure proper identification like the retention of blood cards.
- 2.) A proper and documented chain of custody for the decedent's remains throughout the entire process is maintained. This should be documented on a specific form.
- 3.) A burial option is provided to decedents who were opposed to cremation in life. This could be for religious or other reasons.
- 4.) In the case of unclaimed decedents, a proper and reasonable search for next-of-kin is conducted consistent with contemporary investigative methods.

-Vice-Chairman Moran made a single, unrelated recommendation pertaining to Unidentified Deceased Persons – that a single cemetery is used for the burial of Unidentified Deceased Persons, as opposed to, many cemeteries retaining the county's unidentified over a short period.

-Chairman Beckmann called for a motion to accept the recommendations of the cremation subcommittee

Motion to approve the recommendations made by Rabbi Wolf

Motion seconded by Gallagher

Discussion: Steve Smith – unclaimed cremated remains would be buried in “fetal boxes”, that would have each set of cremated remains in their own compartments. Location data as to where they would be buried would be kept on file at the CCMEO. Dr. Cina – reminded committee that the decedent’s families can always claim their loved one’s remains if they are opposed to cremation. Chairman Beckmann – emphasized that from the point of view of protecting the dignity of the deceased, proceeding with cremation either against the wishes, or without trying to ascertain the wishes of the deceased, was a violation. This is because treating the deceased with dignity means a minimum of abiding by their wishes, or at least trying to ascertain if they had expressed wishes that conflict with the proposed disposition.

Motion passed unanimously by committee

Old/New Business

-Vice-Chairman Moran spoke about the CCMEO’s role in High Risk Missing Person Cases (i.e. Seniors with Alzheimer’s, etc.).

-Dr. Cina answered that the website is current and that we average about five (5) unidentified deceased person cases a year

Adjournment

Chairman Beckmann called for a Motion to Adjourn

Motion made by Roy

Seconded by Secretary Rizzo

No Discussions

Motion to adjourn unanimously approved by committee at **11:43 a.m.**

Next meeting Friday, October 16, 2015

