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To: StephenNelson@polk-county.net
Subject: District 7
Date: 10-May-2018 11:43
Attachments: Letter.pdf [Save] [Open]
Creation Date: 10-May-2018 11:43
Store Date: 10-May-2018 22:58
Status: accepted,opened,read
Box Type: sent
Folder: Sara Zydowicz Home > Sent Items
Message Id: 5AF4689F.VCGDeland.VCDELPO3.200.2000085.1.7411E.1

Dr. Nelson-

Please see attachment. If you have time to discuss this matter let me know when to call.

Thank you,

Sara Zydowicz

Dr. Nelson-

Following up with our conversation regarding my extreme concerns at the District 7 Medical Examiner's Office in Volusia County I am writing to inform you that I have resigned as Chief Medical Examiner effective June 1st, 2018.

As we discussed previously I am deeply concerned about the state of the office and the County's long standing pattern of lack of response in addressing these issues. The office has been neglected to the point that daily work is at times not possible and the risk of critical error is uncomfortably high. I have repeatedly voiced my concerns about the critical and potentially dangerous state of affairs and have not received a satisfactory response. Staying in this office is, for me, untenable; I do not wish to tarnish my reputation staying in a situation I didn't create and I don't wish harm to my well-being. Performing 15-20 autopsies a week in addition to administrative duties and a crumbling (literal and figurative) office is not viable.

Below are a few anecdotes of recent crises. Additionally I have attached recent caseload as well as a summary of budget requests from 2012... the same budget requests that have been asked every year since then, including this year, none fulfilled. I would be happy to provide you with any of these supporting documents.

- **Morgue cooler is consistently over capacity.** Despite an internal review and yearly requests for additional storage were denied until recently. The storage is still not available and decedents have been held at local hospitals for up to 3 days. Families were understandably upset. We were asked to consider: (1). temporary storage at the corrections facilities with cooling blankets and potentially utilizing inmates to move decedents. (2). I was asked to consider 'calling District 9' and asking to utilize their morgue coolers (We do not have any formal/written agreement or procedure with District 9 for this activity). We declined and found a local business that would provide a refrigerated trailer on an 'as-needed' basis. We are awaiting final approval.
- **Critical understaffing:** Per SWGMDI recommendations the District 7 Medical Examiner office should have a staff of 39 based on our case load. Currently we have 14 despite the fact the same staffing requests have been made since 2012. Due to employee injuries we have had 2 autopsy technicians for 6 weeks. When our remaining techs called out sick, we were unable to perform our daily duties. A homicide had to be postponed until the following day therefore law enforcement was unable to arrest the suspect. Additionally I have made multiple requests to advertise nationally to hire contract Medical Examiners to alleviate the caseload. While county official assure me they want to hire more physicians they have not approved much-needed contract position on a nation wide basis.
- Previous Chief Medical Examiner's unfinished cases and testimony: Many cases were left unsigned including a decomposed decedent with a gunshot wound that was left as a pending cause of death. With the current caseload it is quite difficult to close out additional cases. Dr. Hermann has also refused to testify for her homicide cases.

A W.T.F. Moment

Compounding the additional time to review, be deposed and testify is the fact that many of these homicide cases do not have internal pictures. Further, I have been rigorously questioned by the State's Attorney about where Dr. Hermann is and if I have contact with her, etc. It has been recently been made known to me that although subpoenas have been served to Dr. Hermann (who still lives locally) she was 'mean' to the serving deputy and therefore they were 'scared' to serve her with further subpoenas. Now, subpoenas name myself or Dr. Koopeiners. I have asked the county attorney to intervene. I have not received a response.

The current backlog of cases waiting to be proofread is approximately 200. There is one administrative assistant who does the proof reading and is also tasked with media requests, public records requests, maintenance of records, scheduling physicians for trials and depositions, and answering the phone. The county has not funded an existing administrative position for the past 4 years. The county conceded and agreed to hire a 'temporary' to answer the phones. This has not happened and e-mails regarding the temporary position have gone unanswered.

Please let me know if I can provide you with any additional documents or answer any of your questions.

Sincerely,

Sara Zydowicz

Interesting

**VOLUSIA COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER
DIRECTOR'S MEETING**

Goals for 2013

October, 2012

GOAL	Comments
Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built in 1997 • Capital Improvement Project, recommended in 2004 to move forward in 2010, has not been approved for funding • Physical areas of concern – Storage space for supplies, Body storage space (routine, long-term, freezer), odor in administrative area, temperature control (may need system replacement), breakroom facility size (10 x 12, for a staff of 15), structural integrity, electrical capacity, • Recent facility repairs and upkeep – body freezer unit, carpet replacement • Upcoming upkeep projects – floor resurfacing in morgue building ✓ • How to budget for repairs and replacements of building things
Field Training Assignments for Investigators and Forensic Technicians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Span of Control • Investigation section has 4 positions and Forensic Technician section has 4 positions • Neither section has a supervisor position, therefore no sectional authority • Need to establish a formalized hierarchy to give responsibility and authority and accountability
Case Management Software Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still running Access Database that no longer has technical support from the original developer • Still utilizing various paper and individual spreadsheet based data and tracking systems • Very limited capacity to respond to statistical queries
ABMDI Certification for Death Investigators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of three is expected to take the test soon • Two newest on-track - One has completed the week-long course in St. Louis; the other is expected to go in early 2013; then there is checklist competencies completion; then the examination • Funding for some activities may be available through FDLE grant

Fiscal Year 2017				
	Autopsy	External (VX)	DCO	Total
Chief Medical Examiner - Herrmann	438	178	158	774
Associate Medical Examiner - Chiste (left 12/2016)	23	37	21	81
Contract Forensic Pathologist - Zydowicz (started 12/2016)	145	3	1	149
Contract Forensic Pathologist - Hansen (started 4/2017)	71	1	0	72
Associate Medical Examiner - Koopmeiners (started 7/2017)	103	15	5	123
Total	780	234	185	1199

Autopsies	780	Externals/DCO	419	Total
Medical Examiners	3	3 VX/DCO = 1 A	140	
Workload	260		47	307

DR. KOOPMEINERS - ADDITIONAL 247 77 57 1381 total
(OCTOBER-PRESENT)