



INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: Volusia County Council

DATE: May 21, 2018

FROM: George Recktenwald
Deputy County Manager

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "GR", enclosed within a blue circular scribble.

SUBJECT: Medical Examiner Conversation

Attached is a letter written by Dr. Zydowicz and sent to the Florida Medical Examiners Commission. I had encouraged her to seek advice from this same commission, and she has told me that the letter was written for that purpose. I disagree with the characterization of some of the statements in the letter; and believe that at the time she wrote, she may not have fully appreciated the steps that had been undertaken to address her concerns.

Before being promoted to Medical Examiner in April 2018, Dr. Zydowicz was a contracted associate medical examiner for more than a year and a half, who had a good work history with Volusia County since 2016. Because of this relationship, she was a natural choice to promote to medical examiner.

Before her application for the position, Dr. Zydowicz was well aware of the current challenges of the office as well as the capital plans for improvement. During the interview process and at her confirmation by the County Council, she expressed enthusiasm with the opportunity to not only become Medical Examiner but to also have administrative authority to manage this complex county division.

Dr. Zydowicz has had multiple meetings with top administrators in Public Protection and during those meetings, she provided her insight and direction on some of the more pressing issues of the division, such as the nationwide shortage of medical examiners. **She agreed one way to ease the caseload numbers on a short staff by more than 30 percent was to end the contract with Seminole County. That contract was in place since March 18, 1999. The decision was made in April, 2018 to end that contract effective Oct. 1, 2018. A formal letter was sent to Seminole County May 14, 2018.**

Dr. Zydowicz also was aware of the purchase of a portable cooler to store cadavers, as well as the availability of other cooling resources on short-term leases, on the occasion when caseloads rise above capacity. The County Council approved that purchase in FY 2016/17. The cooler is set to be delivered by June 1, 2018.

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Two weeks into her position as Medical Examiner, she met with Public Protection administration, as well as Mr. Dinneen and myself. She had concerns about staffing issues. Two forensic investigators went out on workers' compensation at the same time. This, understandably, increased the workload on the staff. During this meeting, she was told she could get immediate staffing relief through the use of additional employees, two forensic technicians and a temporary office assistant position. At that meeting, we told Dr. Zydowicz also that any additional improvements she requested in the Medical Examiner office would be granted now and in the 2018/2019 budget.

I am uncertain what Dr. Zydowicz meant in her letter to the commission when she referred to a dangerous condition. Dr. Zydowicz gave only personal reasons to me for resigning, including her decision to not move from Orange County. Her attached resignation letter was to the same affect. However, Dr. Zydowicz is willing to return to her former contract part-time status. I am pleased that she will continue her service to the county.

Attachments

c: James Dinneen, County Manager
Donna de Peyster, Deputy County Manager
Daniel Eckert, County Attorney