

DOMES Meeting Minutes – April 27, 2022

Meeting Date: April 27, 2022

Time: 3:00pm

Facilitator: Dan Schebler, Director of Operations

Location: Okaloosa Administration BOCC
Offices/ Via Teams Meeting

Attendees:

- Dan Schebler (Chief Operating Officer (COO))
- Brad Baker (Santa Rosa County)
- Craig Coffey (Okaloosa County)
- Eric Gilmore (Escambia County)
- Melissa Thomason (Walton County)

Mr. Schebler opened the meeting and stated all DOMES Board members were present in person for the meeting. Mr. Schebler turned the meeting over to Mr. Brad Baker.

Public Forum Comments:

No public comment.

Mr. Baker closed public forum and turned the meeting back over to Mr. Schebler

Approval of the Minutes

- March 23, 2022

~Mr. Baker called for a motion to approve the March 23, 2022, meeting minutes. Mr. Coffey moved to approve; Mr. Gilmore seconded; All in favor.

Mr. Baker then turned the meeting over to Mr. Schebler.

Agenda Items

Discussion on Item I (DOMES DRAFT Interlocal Agreement)

The Interlocal Agreement is an evolving topic

- Met with Melissa Thomason of Walton county and the Walton County Sheriff on April 20, 2022 to discuss D1MEO services for Walton County investigations and body transport. It was determined that a separate agreement is needed for Walton County:
 - The Sheriff's Office has agreed to manage death investigations on scene, which means D1MEO will not send investigators out unless it is a high visibility case, a baby death, or an in custody death or something along those lines. In general, the Sheriff's deputy and investigator will manage the scene and provide all required information to the D1 MEO investigator.
 - Sheriff's office will contact D1MEO investigations team to clarify jurisdiction; validate if it is an ME jurisdiction case
 - Melissa is working on procuring or amending a contract for body removal services in Walton County
 - These changes in service were requested and supported by the Sheriff and will improve efficiency and body removal response times.

The Interlocal Agreement is open to re-interpretation of:

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- Fee for service per autopsy for Walton County; fee schedule to be approved with interlocal
- Costs would also include a capital assessment fee in addition to the autopsy fee to help fund the new facility
- Change is in-line with what the Sheriff wants and one of the key stakeholders to the Medical Examiner's office is the Sheriff's office. This is one of the ways the ME's office can support the Sheriff the best way possible.
- Walton County had 140 cases in 2021 an 85% increase over 2020.
- Monthly invoices will be sent to Walton County to include the number of bodies/cases from Walton County
- D1MEO investigators will continue to support the doctor doing the medical exam by requesting medical records, etc.
- Costs to Walton County would be somewhere in the range of \$2,750 per body and then adding in the additional contracting fees that have been in the budget over the years to include:
 - Toxicology, histology -, lab work, consultations if necessary would be a direct pass through on top of these fees using a direct fee schedule
- One option would be to incorporate fee for service into the Interlocal Agreement for all counties
- Second option would be to have an Interlocal Agreement with three counties and a separate agreement for Walton County – this agreement would facilitate discussion regarding the budget and the agreement would need to be approved by each of the 3 Counties BOCC
- D1 would request a reserve be in place so that remaining funds remain with DOMES for reserves

Mr. Schebler stated after the Interlocal Agreement discussion for structure the conversation then leads into "What is DOMES?" I would like to have the DOMES Board input. A suggestion is to create a volunteer board and leave the budget aspect with the counties. Having boards similar to CDAC, United Way, Pathways establishes continuity. This means the DOMES board would be a non-profit and not a county board. The desired level of county oversight will be stated in the Interlocal Agreement.

Mr. Schebler stated having a volunteer board would only help especially as it relates to fundraising or grants requests.

- The Board agrees that there needs to be an agreement on the location for the facility. Covenant to budget should be in the Interlocal Agreement
- Oversight by the Board of Commissioners and the structure to be in place as oversight, is it the DOMES Board as is? Is it a volunteer Board?
- Project cost is down to \$25 and a half Million
- There is opportunity for state funding because we provide services to the state
- Mr. Schebler will be speaking with Senator Broxson' office about an appropriation to fund the capital assessment fee for a period of time upfront to reduce the costs

Mr. Schebler when on to state the Interlocal Agreement needs to have the basics; the oversight desire; commitment to budget, and I agree that we have to agree on what we are budgeting for. We are close to where we need to be. The hard part leads up to the site discussion.

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Mr. Coffey asked had the Industrial Park been ruled out as an option for the site?

Mr. Baker confirmed that is correct, it will not be in the Industrial Park, however there is another spot that we are evaluating to see if they will break the land into parcels. It is a fourteen acre spot just south of the interstate on Garcon Point. There is a light manufacturing plant going in on some of the parcel and their estimated costs of sewer for extension to that location is \$200,000.00 dollars. There was also a spot north of the interstate considered but the opening bid was \$500,000.00 dollars.

Mr. Coffey states he knows this is not on the agenda but recommends that we nail down the location option for 120 days while we try to tie the project in.

There are three options:

1. Fourteen acres south of I-10 on Garcon Point Rd
2. Nineteen acres south of I-10 on Garcon Point Rd
3. 11 acres of land at Avalon Blvd/Commerce (owner may consider sale of a portion)

Mr. Schebler asked the DOMES Board for direction on working on the Interlocal Agreement based on discussion.

- Board agreed that Mr. Schebler should begin work with the DOMES attorney for a draft Interlocal Agreement
- Mr. Schebler to email draft Interlocal to:
 - Melissa Thomason to work with Walton county attorney due to contracting
 - Copy to Craig Coffey at his request to work with Mr. Hofstad on preferences
- Mr. Baker added if the building costs is \$22 Million or \$25 Million a contingency may be needed

Mr. Schebler stated from a timeline perspective he owes the board a copy of the budget. He also asked the board if they would agree providing a model to the three counties and a model to Walton County for consideration?

Mr. Schebler added he is proposing what has been done in the past, which is to take October 2021 to March 2022 and doubled that and added a growth number on that. October to March is what we based the percentage on so you saw quite a bit of fluctuation. Forty-nine percent is what Escambia County has us at this year but it has been as high as 53% and Walton had a year at 7. If you just look at one year they would be at 13% not 12%. We discussed the other factors and 10-12% of our cases come from outside of District residents. Mr. Schebler stated he is proposing DOMES look at two rolling calendar years of stats for the Medical Examiner's office to include:

- Bodies that come to the morgue (not necessarily medical record reviews; phone calls, cremation permits), which would be all the MLA and MLO cases
- Mr. Coffey asked if it would be possible to get a table diagram of two year stats to show what we do now and so we can see a two year progression
- 2019 and prior years will not be included as they were all reimbursable to Gulf Coast Autopsy. That was the projection, but when this business was started this way we just decided to pay in on that amount and pay the bills
- Mr. Schebler stated he would get the stats to the members by the end of May 2022 but as ball park picture the past two years all the MLA's and MLO's:

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- All Bodies: Escambia 51.8 / SRC 14.5 / Okaloosa 24.7 and / Walton 9
- All Bodies minus corrections cases: Escambia 52.1 / SRC 13.5 / Okaloosa 25.3 and / Walton 9.1
- All bodies including every case that calls for records review or a case sent to D1 and jurisdiction is declined the numbers are Escambia 53.4 / SRC 12.6 / Okaloosa 25 and / Walton 8.9
- All bodies including records review, etc. w/corrections removed: Escambia 53.6 / SRC 11.9 / Okaloosa 25.5 and / Walton 9
- If you average all those numbers together and round them a bit you get Escambia 52 / SRC 15 / Okaloosa 25 and / Walton 10 – because if you look at 2020 to 2021 Walton County bodies in the morgue went from 75 to 139 (85% increase)
- Discussion with Walton County will be more interesting to figure out what we want to project, i.e., another 80% increase? The projects will be done on a per service bases for Walton County
- The approved budget, excluding pass through things the cost per autopsy is \$2973 per autopsy (staff time, PPE, body bags, office supplies, everything to run the business)

Mr. Coffey asked if there is an incremental cost for each additional autopsy?

Mr. Schebler stated the autopsy is a cost whether a D1 ME does it or a Locums does it. With four doctors which is what is in the budget by the operating agreement, three doctors do 250 autopsies a year and the Chief ME does two hundred autopsies a year because of the additional responsibilities of being the Chief, so that is 950 autopsies.

Mr. Coffey asked and how many autopsy were done?

Mr. Schebler replied, 1300 autopsies were done in the morgue last year and this year the number of autopsies done will be close to 1500

Upcoming is the

- May Budget
- 2022 State of the Medical Examiner District Presentation is May 3, 2022
- Interlocal Agreement completion should be by June 30 for the beginning of the new fiscal year
- Walton County agreement should be completed by June 30 for the beginning of the new fiscal year
- Per Mr. Coffey he would like to see clear development in the agreement regarding the handling of Walton County cases for costs purposes

Discussion on Item II (CEO/COO Report)

Discussion on Item III (Financial Report)

Budget over all is on track – approximately 44% expenditure. Balance sheet portion reflects more of the capital investment that the county made with the CARES Act money shows the equipment purchased:

- Autopsy tables
- LowDox machine
- Additional X-ray equipment

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Mr. Coffey asked are Locums Tenens up 90% and is it because we are below budget?

Mr. Schebler stated it is a concern whether it is Locum Tenens or the D1 doctors who do more than the prescribed amount. Employee costs are at 30% or so due to being understaffed at the beginning of the year. We hired a new professional employee organization, which is Paychex. The Health care costs have gone down a little; workers comp costs were cut in half. Plan to move employee costs to the Locums line and document it with notes or leave it in the red, which ever the Board prefers. We are waiting to hear from a doctor about coming on but he has not responded as of yet.

Discussion on Item IV (DOMES Other Business)

Other Business

- April 21, 2022 D1 moved to a new HR PEO provider – Paychex
- Working with Paychex to create an HR manual for D1
- Posted a procurement to hire a new body removal service – received only one bid back which was not from the current body removal company.
- Hired a new body removal service, Journey Mortuary, with a nominal monetary increase. May 1, 2022 begins their official contract for service. They were currently supporting the east side after terminating the east side transport for hiring criminals for body transport.
- Hired a new IT company, Data Revolution – thanks to Okaloosa county for purchasing some IT equipment and now we have a company providing data protection.
- New website should be up and operating next week, I hope. We have done away with the old website. There will be a section for the DOMES Board agendas and minutes available on the website.
- May 3, 2022 is the State of the Medical Examiner District Presentation at 2:00pm in SRC. Bring their Chair and Vice-Chair, the meeting has been advertised in the Northwest Florida Daily News and on the BOCC websites.

Next DOMES Meeting Date – May 25, 2022 at 3:00pm.

Santa Rosa County Administrative Complex
BOCC Boardroom

Adjourned: 4:24pm

Next Steps:

- Mr. Schebler to provide draft Interlocal Agreement to Melissa Thomason for Walton County and a copy to the remaining three DOMES Board Counties for review
- Mr. Coffey requested a table diagram of DOMES' last two years of stats to send to the DOMES Board members