

DOMES Meeting Minutes – October 26, 2022

Meeting Date: October 26, 2022
Facilitator: Dan Schebler, Director of Operations

Time: 3:00pm
Location: Santa Rosa County Board of Commissioners Administrative Complex / Boardroom

Attendees:

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

Mr. Schebler opened the meeting and stated the meeting is being recorded via Teams. Mr. Schebler turned the meeting over to Mr. Brad Baker, President of DOMES.

Mr. Baker opened the floor for public comments.

Public Forum Comments:

- No public comments

Mr. Baker moved to recommend the approval of the September 26, 2022 meeting minutes.

Approval of the Minutes

- September 26, 2022

~ Mr. Coffey motioned to approve the minutes with the correction to page 6, amount of accrued vacation be corrected to \$220K; Ms. Thomason seconded. All in favor.

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

Agenda Items

Discussion on Item I (Board Organization)

Mr. Schebler stated for discussion there are officer positions up for annual renewal on the DOMES Board and upon decision must then be filed with the state of Florida Corporations Division. Mr. Schebler asked if the DOMES Board Members had suggestion for the roles of President and Secretary and advised as it stands, Mr. Baker has been the president for the last year, and Mr. Coffey has been secretary for approx. Thirteen months.

The DOMES Board agreed to the following DOMES Board member changes to be filed with the state corporation division for 2023:

- 1) President – Craig Coffey
- 2) Secretary – Melissa Thomason
- 3) Attorney Angie Jones – Registered Agent – local firm

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Discussion on Item II (Monthly Expenditures in Excess of \$5K)

Mr. Schebler reminded the DOMES board that during the last meeting he would be bringing any recurring monthly expenses in excess of \$5K dollars to the DOMES Board for advance approval. Currently the recurring Expenses in excess of 5K are:

- \$25,000.00 thousand monthly (approx.) - Body removal services. Invoice is reviewed for accuracy by staff and then for final review by Mr. Schebler prior to processing payment.
- \$6,700.00 billed quarterly for Operational Research & Assessment (ORA), is for MDILog software purchased for use of the ME case management

At the request of the DOMES Board moving forward Mr. Schebler will provide a check run to the DOMES Board for review and will create a policy for approval amounts and authorities.

Mr. Schebler requested a motion and approval to process these payments as routine payments, without the requirement of the DOMES Board approval each payment period.

~ Mr. Coffey made a motion to approve the routine expenditures as not requiring the DOMES Board approval. Ms. Thomason seconded. All in favor. None opposed.

Discussion on Item III (CEO/COO Report)

Mr. Schebler stated he has provided a copy of the monthly financials and end of year report for the DOMES Board review. Currently DOMES is at 105%, this is due to the ~\$220,000 and also the accountants of the audit moved ~\$159,000 into the fiscal period, the two total approx. \$313,000 thousand dollars. If these monies were removed from the financial report DOMES would actually be at 99%.

The year-end report reflects those accruals. This is the monthly revenue and the month expenditures.

The FY2022-2023 budget accounts for all of cash expected this year to include the county funding, grants, cash, miscellaneous income and the DOC and expert witness fees.

D1MEO received the following grant monies

- DOMES has received a million and a half in grants over the last 15 months
- \$500,000 from FDLE – construction in progress
- \$125,502 from Dept. of Justice- Bureau of Justice grant. Strengthening the Medical Examiner Coroner System grant – will be used for the lab design – construction in progress - No EIS or environmental assessment required per guidelines and requires 2 years performance Waiting to hear from Congressman Gaetz office as to a public announcement on the Award.
- \$103,820 from Impact 100 Pensacola Bay Area grant for the family advocate position; not all of which will be expended or claimed in this budget cycle.
- Received a small grant from NNPHI – will be used to fund integration of data management systems for MDILog and the state system
- Misc. and Reserves for Contingency will be approved by the DOMES Board
- Cash balance is around 12% on the books which is 60-90 days close to GFOA recommendation

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Mr. Schebler asked the DOMES Board for adoption of the budget as presented today.

~ Mr. Coffey moved that the DOMES Board adopt the amended and restated budget. It is the same dollar amount reconfigured with grants.

All in favor. None opposed.

Discussion on Item IV (MEO Facility Update)

Other Business

Three of the four respective boards have voted that Santa Rosa County is an acceptable location for the new medical examiner facility. Escambia county has asked questions regarding vetting other location options. Last month Chairman Barker (Walton) offered five free acres of DOMES' choosing out of the Mossy Head Industrial Park. Currently discussions are being had to determine best way to evaluate and compare options for the best opportunity.

- Relocating to exit 70 will drive up operational annual costs approx. \$75,000 thousand dollars in the first year in transfer cost and does not factor in the operational impact of costs to the sheriff's office, funeral homes and families.
- All four respective county Sheriff's wrote letters of support for the new facility to be built in Santa Rosa County.

Mr. Coffey stated the issue of a new facility vs. a remodeled facility needs to be decided before moving forward in any other areas of the project. If a new facility is the decision then the next decision would be the location of the facility.

Mr. Schebler stated the location has been discussed for the past two years among the DOMES Board and thought it had been resolved. The operating agreement that prior DOMES Board members previously approved was to have a centrally located new medical examiner facility to be prioritized and funded in three to five years. The Escambia County Administrator took this to the Escambia County Board and it was approved 5-0. Mr. Schebler stated he does not recall any of the other three counties taking this to their board and stated it may have been implied as a power of the DOMES Board. After meeting with Escambia County Commissioner yesterday, I was accused of extortion by not offering another option to solve the problem.

Mr. Gilmore provided an update on Escambia Counties current review of optional sites:

- Escambia County Board feels there are options in other spaces.
- Mr. Gilmore stated he has been tasked to meet with Dawn Rudolph of Sacred Heart Hospital and the engineer team for options of remodeling.
- Possibly Baptist Hospital would be a backup consideration if Sacred Heart is not an option.
- Ms. Rudolph is out of town, but Mr. Gilmore will meet with her next week and follow-up with Mr. Schebler.

Mr. Coffey asked if there are one or two sites Escambia County is considering and added that a month ago the DOMES board commissioned an engineering firm to do some work.

Mr. Gilmore added that the Escambia County Board looked at the POB building which is one of the buildings on the backside of the campus of Sacred Heart for retrofitting. It is 28,000 sq. feet, but the

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Escambia County Board does not want to vacate the current autopsy space that the ME's office is in now at Sacred Heart but instead would just move the ME admin office to the POB building.

Mr. Coffey asked why would the Escambia County Board care whether the ME's office moves every function to a new building? Mr. Coffey added if the ME's office remains in the current autopsy suite they would be sharing the current space with the hospital.

Mr. Gilmore responded because the Escambia County Board feels that something can be done to continue utilizing the current autopsy location to make it feasible. Mr. Gilmore added that there has been some additional discussion around the sharing of space.

Mr. Baker added that the building would share a blended parking lot.

Mr. Gilmore added there are 62 parking spots around the POB building and the ME spots could be labeled.

Mr. Coffey asked if the accessibility to the building is good?

Mr. Schebler added there is discussion about improving the road that is in front of the building that may be a cut through road between Airport Rd. and Bayou Rd. which is a 4-lane divided highway.

Mr. Coffey asked if this location would be a donation to DOMES? Mr. Coffey added because buying the building could mean paying \$12M dollars or so and by the time you buy the building and pay construction costs you will be close to paying new construction cost.

Mr. Gilmore stated he is not sure but it would be a buy or lease, but Sacred Heart has not stated exactly which it would be at this time.

Mr. Schebler stated the real estate representative did not provide a quote because the building hasn't been appraised but did state it would be around \$250 dollars per sq. ft. for 28,000 thousand square feet. He added, additionally, the informal answer he has received in communication with Sacred Heart leadership, including their architects and design team, is that there is no ability to expand the autopsy working space in the basement. The total space is about 5600 sq. ft. For the facility programming we are looking at approx. 11,000 sq ft. for autopsy space.

Mr. Coffey stated he has tried to convey to his board that this project is just as important as shared space, i.e., jail space or SAO space and we must come up with a plan to get the ME's office in quality space. Mr. Coffey asked Mr. Gilmore what can the DOMES Board do assist the Escambia County Board concluding their decision?

Mr. Gilmore stated after yesterday's meeting the Escambia County board is waiting to hear from Sacred Heart on whether there is an option to expand the current autopsy space or if there is no option to accommodate more autopsies, etc. Once this is determined, then Baptist Hospital would be the next consideration.

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Mr. Coffey asked, why doesn't the report from the engineer DOMES hired mean as much as the report from the engineer that works for the hospital? Will the hospital give DOMES a sale or lease number?

Mr. Gilmore stated he believe they would be willing to provide a sale or lease number.

Mr. Coffey stated if the meeting between Mr. Schebler and Escambia county could be advertised as a DOMES meeting, he is happy to be available to participate in the meeting.

Mr. Schebler stated when he presented before the Escambia County Board in August, a 30 day timeframe was discussed. Mr. Schebler added DOMES has a contract on a piece of land discussed during the May DOMES meeting that he was advised by the DOMES Board to move forward on. The seller agreed to a 60-day due diligence period that started on October 7, 2022, and extends to December 6, 2022, which would be the last day that we could back out of the purchase. The seller only required \$10,000 thousand dollars in earnest money. If DOMES backs out of the deal by day 45 DOMES can get that \$10,000 dollars earnest money back.

Mr. Coffey asked Mr. Schebler to go back to the seller and ask for an extension of the contract to January 15, 2023.

Mr. Schebler agreed to speak with the seller regarding an extension and added:

- Due diligence is essentially complete
- Zoning has been checked; Mr. Schebler has not had a meeting to-date with the Santa Rosa County planning and zoning staff as of to-date.
- Survey is complete
- The utility service letters are available
- The geotech has been done
- Architects and Civil engineer have reviewed

Mr. Schebler asked the DOMES Board to advise on next steps?

Mr. Coffey asked if there is a willingness for the Santa Rosa County to purchase the land?

Mr. Baker added there has been some concern as to how it would appear to the other respective boards if Santa Rosa County takes action prior to Escambia County completing their research. Santa Rosa County only has one BOCC meeting in November and that leaves only a week to present the options. Mr. Baker added he did not want to have the BOCC conversation until hearing from Mr. Gilmore on Escambia Counties position today.

Mr. Schebler added a request was made to the DOMES Board and each respective county boards for budget amendment to design phase I because we have a \$500,000 grant from the state that provides matching funds for Phase I. Escambia County has paid in \$411,507.15 towards this project.

Mr. Coffey stated there are some timing issues here and the next opportunity for funding will be during the legislative session which starts in March 2023. If we don't have a plan in place by December 2022, DOMES will need to pick a course in January to have any hope of getting additional money. If we can all agree on a path, Senator Broxson has expressed he will present the request during the session.

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Mr. Baker added the key to making the December timeframe happen is getting a four respective BOCC's together.

Mr. Coffey stated he would propose that the statute is not very clear. Currently, it says "you are obligated to pay for certain expenses", but we have situations where individual boards have said they are not approving the budget but the remaining respective three boards have approved. Mr. Coffey added, he will propose changes to the legislation to state "if there is a super majority for some issues, three out of the four respective boards can approve and the other board will be obligated to the majority vote". The DOMES board is not a functional board if one of the four respective county board can disrupt the order and the other three boards cannot make a move.

Mr. Schebler stated changes to the statute are worth discussing but would recommend broaching this delicately in Tallahassee because there are other multi-district counties and they do not have these types of concerns. In some instances, the larger counties take on responsibilities and bill smaller counties. Other options would be for DOMES to have separate agreements with each county for services; or separate contracts for services with three out of the four respective counties with that one county receiving a bill for services. There are other options DOMES may consider.

Mr. Coffey stated he would prepare draft language to present to the DOMES board for the November meeting for discussion in advance of the legislative cycle.

Mr. Schebler once again, asked the DOMES Board to advise of next steps.

Ms. Thomason asked if the evaluation that Escambia County is doing does not produce a viable option has Escambia County discussed going back to the option of using the Santa Rosa County land? She added it would gain more traction with Walton County because the Walton BOCC is pretty set on the percentage to contribute, but at the same time the Walton BOCC has expressed that they want to work together. If Escambia could come up with a plan to present to the three respective boards for vetting, then this can be considered as well.

Mr. Gilmore stated once the Escambia BOCC has vetted the current options, he is not sure what the next obstacle will be.

Mr. Schebler added that Dr. Oleske signed a contract that DOMES must decide by November 21, 2022.

- Land detail - 9.17 acres at \$745,852.00 plus closing
- Seller owns the land
- Seller agreed based on conversation with SRC commissioner to hold the land for consideration

Mr. Schebler stated, to try and preclude some Santa Rosa County issues; if DOMES were to purchase the land then DOMES could sell the land later to Santa Rosa County later if needed, but DOMES does not have the money to buy the land. The carry forward balance for the next 45 days of our operating cost are at \$600,000.00 excluding the Escambia County money.

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Mr. Baker stated he will not vote on this option until having further discussion with the Santa Rosa County BOCC.

Mr. Schebler stated he has been in discussion with a bank representative and DOMES could carry a small loan for about 18-24 months. Each county contributing the amount equal to what Escambia county has contributed would solve the problem with DOMES making the decision to move forward or not. If the Walton county site turns out to be better option then DOMES could sell the Santa Rosa County land and DOMES would move forward with building in Walton county.

Mr. Baker stated he will go back and have discussion.

Mr. Schebler stated he had a separate meeting with the Santa Rosa County Administrator and the county attorney, of which Mr. Baker was not present for, and asked the question about the land purchase. I think Santa Rosa County would prefer to buy the land themselves and I would prefer DOMES buy, so there is a little disagreement on this option. Six weeks ago, Santa Rosa County was onboard with providing DOMES the money to buy the land and if for some reason the deal did not go through, DOMES giving the money back, but there was a legal loophole with this idea. Mr. Schebler asked the DOMES Board if it is an option for DOMES to fund? One would be some approval of some amount down and float the rest as a loan or I find a developer to take on the costs. Mr. Schebler stated he needs to provide notice if we do not plan to close the deal.

~ No action taken

Meeting Schedule for Remainder of 2022

Mr. Schebler stated in timing of the next Santa Rosa County BOCC for any action, the next meeting of the DOMES Board would need to meet the week of November 7th. If DOMES meets the week of November 7th, public notice will need to be made this week.

Mr. Baker stated he will know the direction the Santa Rosa County Board is going by November 3rd.

The DOMES Board agreed to the next meeting as follows:

Next DOMES Meeting Date – November 10, 2022 at 1:00pm
Okaloosa County Administrative Complex
302 N. Wilson Street, Suite 302
Crestview, FL 32563

Other Business:

Physician Recruitment

Mr. Schebler stated DOMES is in the process of hiring a doctor who is finishing his fellowship and is here in the US on J1 Visa. Mr. Schebler added that the doctor has submitted a waiver application to the Department of Health, the next step is getting the application to the Department of State Customs and Immigration to get a Visa to allow him to work in the US. DOMES is equally splitting the cost as part of the physician recruitment process. The federal government requirement for a Visa is a commitment of 3 years. That would bring DOMES to having four doctors. A fifth doctor is still needed. The current Locums Tenens money could be used for the hiring of a fifth doctor. Total cases today are at the total

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cases as of last year already and we still have two months left in the year. Closing numbers will be close to 1500.

~No action taken

Indigent Agreement/Policies

Mr. Schebler added he would ask that the DOMES Board review their indigent case programs at their county level. Holding indigent bodies for the counties takes up space in the morgue cooler. Please review your policies and the agreement that was approved for holding. The hold time was for a one-week period. If the policies or agreements need to be changed, we can discuss. Currently there are no issues with the funeral homes paying or picking up on time.

~No action taken

Mr. Baked moved to adjourn the meeting. All in favor.

Adjourned: 4:21pm

Next Steps:

- Mr. Schebler to provide the DOMES Board next month with a check run and one page policy on threshold amounts requiring approval.
- Mr. Schebler to speak with the land owner about extending the due diligence period to January 15, 2023 and subsequently later to extend the closing. By January 5th (90-days)
- Mr. Coffey to provide DOMES Board with draft legislation for the state statute.