

Minutes of the Fourth Circuit Medical Examiner Search Committee

2 p.m., July 11, 2018

State Attorney's Office, 311 W. Monroe St., Jacksonville, Florida

Members Present

State Attorney Melissa Nelson, Fourth Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office

Chief Assistant Dana Brady-Giddens, Third Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office, designee of
State Attorney Jeff Siegmeister, Third Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office

Candice Brower, Regional Counsel of the Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional
Counsel, 1st DCA Region

Honorable Gayward Hendry, Clay County Commissioner, District 5

Honorable Justin Taylor, Nassau County Commissioner, District 5

Sheriff Mark Hunter, Columbia County

Chief James Hurley, Fernandina Beach Police Department

Chief Michelle Cook, Atlantic Beach Police Department

Sheriff Bill Leeper, Nassau County

Sheriff Mike Williams, Jacksonville

Public Defender Blair Payne, Third Judicial Circuit

Chief Assistant Lewis Buzzell, Fourth Judicial Circuit Public Defender's Office, designee of
Public Defender Charlie Cofer, Fourth Judicial Circuit

Dr. David Rice, MD

Dr. Stephen Nelson, MD, Chairman, Florida Medical Examiners Commission

Others present

L.E. Hutton, Fourth Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office

Stephen Siegel, Fourth Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office

David Chapman, Fourth Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office

Diane Moser, City of Jacksonville, Director of Employee Services

Leah Hayes, City of Jacksonville, Chief of Talent Management, Personnel Services

Tim Crutchfield, District Four Medical Examiner's Office

Andrew Pantazi, Florida Times-Union

Meeting

Members of the committee and those in attendance formally introduced themselves to the group.

The meeting opened with the announcement that District Four Medical Examiner Valerie Rao had agreed to delay her retirement until a new chief is appointed. The committee has agreed to

move as swiftly as possible in finding suitable candidates. The search committee will submit qualified candidates to the Florida Medical Examiners Commission, which will then review candidates and submit choices to the governor of Florida.

The discussion led into a PowerPoint presentation on the basics of the District Four Medical Examiner's Office, which serves more than 1 million people total and a multitude of law enforcement and criminal justice agencies in several Northeast Florida counties.

The PowerPoint presentation overview of the office (see corresponding PowerPoint) was led by Stephen Siegel, First Assistant State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial Circuit. Siegel said the goal is to find the most qualified candidates, with the committee creating a compensation package, seeking qualified candidates, reviewing candidate submissions and their backgrounds, and ultimately interviewing candidates by a team of at least three committee members.

After Siegel's presentation, State Attorney Nelson asked if an outside firm was ever used for such a search, and if the City of Jacksonville provided a budget. Diane Moser, City Employee Services Director, said there was no budget set aside for a firm.

Dr. Stephen Nelson, a member of the Florida Medical Examiners Commission, stated the commission would be meeting in West Palm Beach in mid-October and he would like to take materials related to the District's search to reach a broader candidate pool. He stated that medical examiners are in high demand and his most recent review indicated 37 openings seeking assistance, including several chief medical examiners. Dr. Nelson also suggested advertisements could be placed with state and national association job boards.

The committee was reminded of its operation under Florida Sunshine Law as it related to communication among members, including emails and drafts.

Chief James Hurley asked about the Medical Examiner's Office escalating budget trend over the past several years, based on the PowerPoint. Tim Crutchfield of the Medical Examiner's Office replied that the opioid epidemic, traditional funding shortages, and the outsourcing of toxicology all contributed to the needed increase.

Dr. Nelson also noted the workload of offices should not exceed 250 autopsies a year per professional — anything more has shown to create problems.

Chief Hurley asked if Dr. Rao had a succession plan in mind. It was asked whether the next chief medical examiner needed to be board-certified, which Dr. Nelson replied affirmatively. It

was also asked whether any of the current associates within the office were board certified and whether any of them were going to apply for the position.

The committee set a date for its next meeting for 2 p.m., August 13, at the Fourth Circuit State Attorney's Office.

Public Comment

No public comment.