

Minutes of the Fourth Circuit Medical Examiner Search Committee  
2 p.m. Nov. 27, 2018  
State Attorney's Office, 311 W. Monroe St., Jacksonville, Florida

**Members Present**

Co-Chair Melissa W. Nelson, Fourth Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office  
Jan Abel, Regional Counsel, Office of Criminal Conflict and Regional Counsel  
Sheriff Mark Hunter, Columbia County  
Sheriff J. Harrell Reid, Hamilton County  
Chief James Hurley, Fernandina Beach Police Department  
Chief Michelle E. Cook, Atlantic Beach Police Department  
Chief Chris Butler, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office  
Blair Payne, Public Defender's Office of the Third Judicial Circuit  
Lewis Buzzell, Chief Public Defender of the Fourth Judicial Circuit  
Rose Walker, Holmes-Glover-Soloman  
City Councilman Sam Newby, Jacksonville  
Dr. Stephen Nelson, Florida Medical Examiners Commission Chairman (via telephone)

**Others Present**

Stephen Siegel, First Assistant State Attorney, Fourth Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office  
Leah Hayes  
Tim Crutchfield, Fourth Circuit Medical Examiner's Office  
Betty Russell, Evergreen Solutions LLC (via telephone)  
David Chapman, Fourth Circuit State Attorney's Office

**Meeting**

**Start: 2:10 p.m.**

The meeting began with a report from Betty Russell of Evergreen Solutions (via conference call), who discussed the methodology and scope of a comparison salary survey.

Due to there being so few offices, the study looked at Medical Examiner's Offices from across the country. It excluded coroners and offices featuring just a single person or two people. When possible, it looked at offices with similar demographics to the Fourth Circuit Medical Examiner's Office. (See study for more details.)

Russell said that when looking at Florida and its districts, the Fourth Circuit Medical Examiner salary range was a "very fair rate." That rate was compared to the proposed range (a ceiling of

\$343,000), not the current salary. Russell said this range was “quite comparable” nationally and in Florida.

Russell suggested that the minimum scale of the range be improved some; however she noted that typically newly hired personnel tend to be hired more toward the middle or higher end of the salary range.

For those candidates who were not certified, the idea of a bonus to attain certification was mentioned. Additionally, “interesting stipends” or other considerations to attract uncertified candidates could be discussed, said Russell.

On the benefits side of compensations, Russell said she was “impressed by the level of benefits” the city offers.

Siegel went on to say that the committee has received applications from candidates and he has received calls from some inquiring about the position, but who have not applied. In all, eight people have applied for the Chief Medical Examiner position. The next step, he said, will be to perform background checks on each of the candidates to better inform the group.

Once those background checks are completed, the committee can then form an interview committee and establish interview dates, said Siegel.

The committee then discussed whether it was appropriate to pare down the applicants, pre-interviews, to include only those who are board certified. The committee decided to leave all applicants in the candidate pool.

Discussion then shifted to whether interviews should be done in-person or via a program such as Skype. Diane Moser with the City of Jacksonville said the city often does Skype interviews and it could work in this process. For candidates who are local, she said, the committee could offer an in-person interview if they are willing to attend in person.

Dr. Stephen Nelson suggested not doing in-person interviews would be “pennywise and pound foolish.” Some, including Sheriffs Mark Hunter and Harrell Reid, said they preferred in-person interviews. Siegel said there would be no vote at this time, as the City of Jacksonville paid for travel expenses and it was ultimately its call. He said he would contact the City to inquire whether those expenses being covered were possible.

Chief Hurley asked whether there needed to be more time for more applicants to apply and if this was a sufficient candidate pool. Siegel said the applications have stopped arriving and it probably means there will be no more applicants.

**End 2:51 p.m.**