Tennessee Medical Examiner Advisory Council
Friday, January 19, 2018, 1:00 P.M. – 3:01 P.M. CST

MEMBERS	REPRESENTATION	STATUS
Darinka Mileusnic, M.D., Ph.D.	Forensic Pathologist Forensic Center	Present
Bob Batson	Licensed Funeral Director	Present
Julia Goodin, M.D., M.P.A.	State Chief Medical Examiner	Present
Honorable Amy Weirich	District Attorney General	Telephonic
Tony R. Emison, M.D.	County Medical Examiner (West TN)	Present
Dwayne Johnson	Assistant Director of the TBI	Present
Ed Miller, J.D.	District Public Defender	Telephonic
Lorraine MacDonald, M.D.	County Medical Examiner (Middle TN)	Telephonic
Benjamin Figura, Ph.D.	Admin Regional Forensic Center (West)	Telephonic
E. Hunt Scheuerman, M.D.	Forensic Pathologist Forensic Center	Telephonic
Feng Li, M.D., Ph.D., J.D.	Forensic Pathologist Forensic Center	Present
James Metcalfe, M.D.	Forensic Pathologist Forensic Center	Present
Marco Ross, M.D.	Forensic Pathologist Forensic Center	Telephonic
David D. Darden, D.O., M.P.H.	County Medical Examiner (East TN)	Present
Mayor Jake Bynum	Weakley County Mayor	Telephonic
NON-MEMBERS	REPRESENTATION	STATUS
Adele Lewis, M.D.	Deputy State Chief Medical Examiner	Present
Margaret A. Hyder, M.A.	Deputy Director	Present
Frances Wheatley, M.A., ABMDI-F	State Medicolegal Death Investigator	Present
Andrew Wilson, B.S., ABMDI-F	State Medicolegal Death Investigator	Present
Gray Bishop	TN State Registrar	Present
Kathy Seeley	VRISM	Present
Erin Wilson	VRISM	Present
Jeremy Davis	Assistant Commissioner - Legislative Affairs	Present
Michael Warren, M.D., M.P.H., F.A.A.P.	Deputy Commissioner for Pop. Health	Present
GUESTS	REPRESENTATION	STATUS
Jim Farris	Forensic Medical	Present
J.A. Bucy	Middle TN and Funeral Home Lobbyist	Present

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 P.M. on Friday, January 19, 2018 in Conference Room A, 5th Floor, Andrew Johnson Tower.

1:00 P.M.   **1. Roll Call and Voting**

Dr. Mileusnic welcomed the council and requested introductions from each member, their names and representations. All council members were present in-person or telephonic. Bob Batson moved to approve the minutes from December 1, 2017, which were electronically distributed prior to the meeting, Dr. Goodin seconded the motion and the minutes were approved by unanimous vote of "Yea." Dr. Goodin asked that the council review the date set for the October council meeting, as it conflicts with the National Association of Medical Examiners conference.

1:06 P.M.   **2. Separation of OSCME from TN Department of Health:**

Assistant Commissioner Jeremy Davis was present to answer questions regarding the autonomy of the Office of the State Chief Medical Examiner (OSCME) through separation from the Department of Health. Assistant Commissioner Davis was unaware of any other entities administratively not connected to a department in state government. Dr. Mileusnic brought up the point that within the Department of Health the medical examiner system would be the least

important office, not receiving the attention it should. Assistant Commissioner Davis advised that legislators prefer an umbrella (department) over smaller offices, and in order to separate the office from the Department of Health legislation would be required. Additional concerns voiced by Dr. Darden included the possibility that any change in administration could directly change the appointment of the state chief medical examiner, even if the current state chief medical examiner was doing an exceptional job. Assistant Commissioner Davis advised that turnover of positions such as the State Chief Medical Examiner are far less likely than direct reports to the commissioner, such as deputy and assistant commissioners. However, Dr. Mileusnic brought up the fact that, based on the new Statute, the Medical Examiner Advisory Council does have the power to recommend to the Commissioner who should be appointed the State Chief Medical Examiner. Assistant Commissioner Davis agreed that if the Commissioner does not listen to the council, the council could take the issue to Sunset Review. Assistant Commissioner Davis also advised that any additional questions the council might have should be sent to Margaret Hyder, to be forwarded to him.

1:18 P.M.   3. Legislation:

Dr. Mileusnic provided the council members with handouts of Tennessee Code 68-2-500 – Death Registration, specifically in reference to 68-2-502 - Suicide. Dr. Mileusnic pointed out the antiquated sections under Death Registration, and suggested the entire section is haphazardly put together. Dr. Mileusnic suggested the council rewrite the code. Dr. Li expressed his concerns regarding 68-2-502, advising suicide is not a manner of death medical examiners take lightly, it is the practice of medicine and should not be decided by lay people. Dr. Mileusnic will draft proposed legislation to be reviewed by the council, and asked if TDH can file the bill. Deputy Commissioner Warren explained that the window for TDH to present bills is closed, but the council could independently find a sponsor to introduce the rewrite.

A second legislative piece involved autopsy reports and public records, whereas death certificates are not public record, autopsy reports are public record. Dr. Mileusnic provided examples of autopsy reports that contain HIPAA protected information, and suggested legislation to make autopsy reports privacy rules to coincide with death certificate privacy rules. Dr. Metcalfe voiced his support of possible legislation.

1:45 P.M.   4. VRISM:

Dr. Mileusnic and Dr. Li shared their frustrations regarding the amount of time they have to spend on each case to certify a death certificate, which averages 15 to 25 minutes per case. Bob Batson advised that the funeral directors set up weekly conference calls with the state to discuss issues they faced with VRISM, and many of those issues were resolved by the state quickly. Mr. Batson suggested the medical examiners work out a similar arrangement in order to resolve the issues they are facing. Dr. Warren advised that it is in the state's interest to resolve the issues faced by the forensic centers regarding VRISM. Dr. Macdonald suggested more training may be needed, as she was able to certify cases fairly quickly, and found the ability to certify death certificates online far more efficient. Jim Farris advised the process must take less than five minutes per case for the forensic centers to use VRISM efficiently. Dr. Warren's team prepared a presentation regarding the current VRISM projects and improvements that should make the system user-friendly, particularly for the large volume forensic centers. Ten improvements that are currently being worked on should be implemented in about 30 days.

2:51 P.M.   5. Problem Areas and Agenda for Future Meeting:

Dr. Mileusnic asked the council for topics the council should address in future meetings. The topics of concern are listed below:

a) Medical Examiner/Medicolegal Death Investigator training and quality control,
b) Reports of Investigation – proof of work involved as medical examiner,
c) County budgets for Medical Examiner Offices,
d) Succession plan for medical examiners as they age out of the role,
e) Fees for cremation permits, and other funding possibilities,

Dr. Mileusnic suggested determining a per capita minimum each county should budget for medical examiner services.

3:00 P.M.   **6. Council Wrap-Up:**

- Dr. Mileusnic advised the council she would work on amendments for legislation over the weekend and have drafts for council members the following week. The deadline to introduce legislation is February 1, 2018. The next meeting of the council was set for April 13, 2018 at 1:00 P.M. Future meetings listed below:

  - July 13, 2018 – 1:00 CST – Andrew Johnson Tower, 5th Floor, Conference Room A
  - October/November TBD via Survey – 1:00 CST – Andrew Johnson Tower, 5th Floor, Conference Room A*
  *New date to avoid conflict with NAME conference.

Submitted by:

_____, MD, PhD
Darinka Mileusnic, M.D., Ph.D.
Knox County Chief Medical Examiner
Chair, Medical Examiner Advisory Council

_Margaret A. Hyder_____
Margaret A. Hyder, M.A.
Deputy Director
Office of the State Chief Medical Examiner