



**Department of Forensic Sciences  
Science Advisory Board Meeting Minutes  
May 4, 2018**

The Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) Science Advisory Board meeting was called to order by board chairman Peter Marone at 9:07 a.m. Board members present included, Mr. John Paul Jones II, Ms. Danielle O’Neill, Dr. Michael Pentella and Mr. Robert Thompson. Dr. Simone N. Gittelsohn participated via WebEx conferencing. A quorum was established to conduct board business. Minutes from the January 11 meeting were presented and read.

**Motion to Approve Minutes:** Board Member Jones      **Seconded:** Board Member O’Neill  
**Motion to Approve Minutes Passed**

Board chairman Marone requested the email addresses and telephone numbers of key DFS personnel and members of the Science Advisory Board be compiled and posted online in a web location where the information is accessible by board members and staff.

**New DFS Appointments**

Mr. Christopher LoJacono, Director of the Crime Scene Sciences (CSS) division, was introduced to the board. He recounted his more than 28 years of service with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) serving in leadership roles ranging from Commander/Deputy Chief of Internal Affairs, Commander/Deputy Chief of Office of Unified Communications to Commander Deputy Chief of the Forensic Science Division. Included among Director LoJacono’s accomplishments in law enforcement was his contribution to the establishment of a small DNA unit, the trace analysis unit (no longer in existence), the evidence control unit and the Consolidated Forensic Laboratory.

Chairman Marone inquired about the current status of the CSS division staffing components to which Director LoJacono reported that replacement of current MPD officers who leave the division is not anticipated. As discussions regarding right-sizing continue, a general Order issued by MPD specifies that officers respond to lesser offenses that include theft from autos, destructions of property, domestic violence cases and burglaries. DFS Crime Scene staff respond to homicides, carjackings, bank robberies and other major crime.

The recent proliferation of dangerous chemicals (fentanyl, opioids) has not led to specific enhancements in the recovery of dangerous and hazardous substances for the Crime Scene Sciences Unit (CSSU), according to Director LoJacono. However, staff are regularly reminded to take appropriate precaution with proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) Director Karen Wiggins reports that latent fingerprint hits coupled with pattern recognition disciplines and the support of the department’s forensic intelligence primarily have attributed to solving burglaries, according to local law enforcement. The methods are cheaper than DNA and latent fingerprint tends to move the criminal justice process more quickly. Director Wiggins added that chemical lab processing is transitioning from CSS to the Latent Fingerprint Unit which will



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create workflows within the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS), facilitating identification of the individual responsible for recovery and determination of recovery value.

Citing reexaminations performed in connection with the Firearms Examination Unit's past casework errors, Director Wiggins briefly discussed circumstances possibly deserving of the laboratory's consideration for a reexamination policy.

## **Quality Update**

### **Complaints**

Two complaints by former DFS employees were received from ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB) during the past quarter. A response to the first complaint, due April 27, has been completed and submitted to ANAB and to the Science Advisory Board. The department's request for an extension to respond to the second complaint has been granted by ANAB. The complaint primarily involves laboratory document control in evidence handling, distinguishing package tracking, chain of custody and transfers and an apparent lack of clarity in procedure. ANAB has requested email issued to lab staff and information related to the LIMS authentication process. The final response to the complaint and the requested documents are expected to be submitted to ANAB on this date (May 4). Accordingly, the board will also receive a copy of the second complaint and response and both complaints and the department's responses will be posted on the DFS website.

### **Audits and Assessments**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will conduct a bi-annual CLIA audit of the Public Health Laboratory (PHL) May 16 through May 18, 2018. The Digital Evidence Unit (DEU), relatively new to the Forensic Science Laboratory, is not accredited but is scheduled for a pre-assessment audit May 22 to May 23, 2018, with an expectation of readiness for an on-site audit scheduled in August.

### **Public Health Update**

The Forensic Chemistry Unit (FCU) has received accreditation, with exception of quantification (purity) of heroin, and is currently working closely with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in preparing the laboratory set up. In the meantime, DEA will conduct purity analysis of heroin.

Forensic Chemistry Unit (FCU) manager, Dr. Luke Short, informed the board that FCU, although a unit within the Public Health Laboratory (PHL), more accurately functions as a section, as it is comprised of two units, having one unit designated for clinical chemistry that is within CLIA standards and another unit for forensic chemistry that conforms to ISO 17025 standards. Dr. Short reported on a broad range of activities taking place during the unit's first month after assuming responsibility for analysis of controlled substances formerly conducted by DEA. Case acceptance, prioritization and turnaround time were addressed and statistical data identifying annual and projected cases by key stakeholders (MPD, DEA, Assistant United States Attorney's Office) was presented. The Department of Energy and



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Environment (DOEE) and Georgetown University were acquired as new District customers for FCU during this period. Currently, FCU accepts syringes from only the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. A proposal has been submitted to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), in anticipation of receiving a grant-funded fulltime chemist whom would be dedicated to the slow and time-intensive syringe analysis process.

Dr. Short reassured the board that tech review is conducted upon case review of FCU cases.

### **DFS Grants Applications**

Of the four grant applications submitted during the past quarter, two were Coverdell: 1- Formula for the Latent Fingerprint Unit (LFU), allotting 4 to 5 month contracting of fulltime personnel assigned to address backlog; 1- Competitive (valued at approximately \$250,000), to which the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner also has applied. The third application consists of the aforementioned syringe proposal, valued at approximately \$300,000, submitted to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Research and Evaluation on Drugs and Crime. The fourth application is a NIJ grant on R&D in Forensic Science for Criminal Justice Purposes which focuses on firearms research and the identification of fired projectiles. Two additional DNA applications, (1-DNA Capacity Enhancement and Backlog Reduction; 1-DNA Laboratory Efficiency Improvement), are planned for submission during the forthcoming weeks.

Board member Jones recommended that FCU consider submission of the syringe project, as a public health issue, to the Arnold Foundation, if the NIJ grant application is not successful.

Board member O'Neill led the board's dialogue incorporating board member recommendations into the board's PCAST draft response fingerprint document.

Deputy Director Graham announced that six days per month DFS, in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police Department, conducts training of all new police recruits completing the academy and reserve officers assigned to perform crime scene. An additional 100 crime scene experience officers are projected within the next four months.

DFS will host the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) Forensic Conference August 8<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> at the Consolidated Forensic Laboratory.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

An audio recording of the meeting is available upon request.