



**Department of Forensic Sciences  
Science Advisory Board Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, January 11, 2018**

The Department of Forensic Sciences Science (DFS) Advisory Board meeting was brought to order by board chairman Peter Marone at 9:10 a.m. Board members present included Dr. Simone N. Gittelson, Mr. John Paul Jones II, Dr. Jeanne A. Jordan, Ms. Danielle O'Neill and Mr. Robert Thompson. Dr. Michael Pentella participated via WebEx conferencing. A quorum was established to conduct board business and the meeting commenced with board and staff introductions. Minutes from the October 20, 2017, WebEx meeting were presented and read.

**Motion to Approve Minutes:** Board Member Jordan      **Seconded:** Board Member Gittelson  
**Motion to Approve Minutes Passed**

**Public Health Laboratory**

Recently, three new hires joined the Forensic Chemistry Unit (FCU) and currently receiving training. The Virology/Immunology Unit acquired one new hire. However, one vacancy is imminent, given the scheduled departure of an employee, for which recruitment will be promptly conducted to refill the position. Through a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the lab acquired a Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) Developer (contractor) for database and programming development to champion the lab's transition from paper-based ordering to electronic online ordering and reporting. Recruitment of an outreach coordinator to communicate lab and epidemiological issues with District hospitals is planned. The hybrid position will fulfill work for the PHL as well as the D.C. Department of Health.

To accommodate expanded rabies testing in the PHL, scheduled phases of renovations are planned for the Biological Safety Level 3 (BSL-3) laboratory. Meanwhile, the laboratory is continuing ZIKA molecular testing and soon scheduled to commence surveillance activities which includes influenza, reportedly having reached epidemic levels.

**Quality Update**

No complaints were received during the past reporting period. Two inquiries were received: Inquiry #1 - Public Defender Service (PDS) request rework of Firearms Examination Unit (FEU) case by former examiner. Inquiry #2 - High school student request DFS DNA methodology for school assignment.

ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB) conducted a pre-assessment audit of the Forensic Chemistry Unit (FCU) November 6 and 7. A gap analysis uncovered 7 to 8 non-conformities, quickly resolved by the FCU team. An external audit January 8 through 10 for 17025 accreditation resulted in one minor non-conformity related to the expiration of weight calibration. An action plan by the Quality team and FCU is expected to correct the non-conformity well within the prescribed timeline. To date, the FCU has been performing casework for the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), the D.C. Department of Corrections and the Metropolitan Police Department. The unit is scheduled to begin receiving the District's confiscated drug cases in April 2018.



Page 2 of 3  
Science Advisory Board Meeting  
Minutes  
January 11, 2018

An internal audit of the Public Health Laboratory (PHL) December 5 through 7 resulted in 12 overarching CLIA non-conformities and 28 DSAT non-conformities. This assessment was primarily a desk audit involving the review of laboratory manual documents. Having issued Q-CARS, the Quality is expected to assemble review sessions with PHL unit managers to decrease the number of non-conformities identified.

### **Firearms Examination Unit Update**

Firearms Examination Unit (FEU) manager Jonathan Pope conducted a review of activity related to the 2016-2017 examiner casework errors occurring in the FEU. The board engaged a dialogue with Mr. Pope and Forensic Science Laboratory Director Karen Wiggins concerning the lab's response to and recovery from the FEU casework errors.

Mr. Pope announced that the FEU is the sub-beneficiary to the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) of a 2-year million dollar federal grant sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, National Crime Gun Intelligence Center and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). The financial support is intended to expedite the NIBIN process in the collection of evidence, investigation, management and analysis of crime gun evidence. The MPD Seventh District, where the pilot project currently resides, is one of five city-recipients to receive the grant. Presently, the FEU contributes to a national database containing a vast amount of cartridge casings and projectiles and looks forward to the purchase of additional equipment enabling the unit to conduct research in support of statistical analyses of cartridge casings and projectiles.

DFS Director Smith informed the board of the department's funding challenges and the decline in opportunities to resources provided by grants. Director Smith further expressed the department's willingness and interest to partner with scientists and institutions and to make available laboratory space for scientific projects. At present, the laboratory is continuing discussions with the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) for the development of a forensic science curriculum.

DFS will move the Chem Lab from the Crime Scene Sciences Division to the Forensic Science Laboratory Latent Fingerprint Unit. The Chem Lab will be staffed temporarily by reassigned Crime Scene Scientists until positions are created and recruitment is conducted.

### **SAB Review of PCAST Relevant to DFS Procedures**

The Board discussed published forensic science reviews, studies and research and collectively initiated the drafting of an official DNA document in response to the PCAST report as it relates to the laboratory work done by the Department of Forensic Sciences.

Andrea Borchardt, Forensic Biology Unit (FBU) Manager, appeared before the board to explain application of the unit's SOPs relating to DNA mixtures, validation, STRmix and Global Filer.



Page 3 of 3  
Science Advisory Board Meeting  
Minutes  
January 11, 2018

### **SAB Review of DFS Proficiency Test Program and Providers**

Deputy Director Graham confirmed having considered proficiency test providers recommended by members of the board. She encouraged the board to continue the recommendations and added that there is specific interest in providers capable of fulfilling all proficiency testing needs of the department.

Board Chairman Peter Marone reviewed assignment designations agreed to by board members and DFS staff.

### **Motion**

In the near future the board will receive an email request for the member's vote on the board's response to the PCAST report, as it relates to DNA, and to respond within a week after receipt of the email.

### **Motion Seconded and Passed.**

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

An audio recording of the meeting is available upon request.