



**Department of Forensic Sciences  
Science Advisory Board Meeting Minutes  
January 18, 2019**

The Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) Science Advisory Board meeting was called to order by board chairman Peter Marone at 9:11 a.m. Board members present included, Dr. Namandjé Bumpus, Dr. Simone N. Gittelsohn, Dr. Jeanne Jordan, Ms. Danielle O’Neill and Dr. Michael Pentella. A quorum was established to conduct board business and the Minutes from the October 19, 2018, meeting were presented and read.

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

Board Chairman Peter Marone acknowledged receipt of comments submitted by board member John Paul Jones II on behalf of the committee reviewing Digital Evidence protocols. The Chairman requested that Mr. Paul Reedy distribute the comments to all board members. The Digital Evidence protocols review committee is projected to present its findings for board discussion during the July 2019 meeting.

DFS Director, Dr. Jenifer Smith, presented testimony during a November 29, 2018, public roundtable before the Council of the District of Columbia’s Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety concerning the Science Advisory Board rulemaking. Subsequently, on December 7, 2018, the draft regulations received passive approval as projected and previously reported by DFS General Counsel. At this time, publishing of the regulations is not known.

No formal complaints have been received since the board’s October 19, 2018, meeting. However, during the same period, five inquiries were received: 2-requests for information from universities involving research and the department’s internship program; 1-Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) request for the department’s NIBIN policies; 1-MPD request concerning a tort claim related to analysis of video equipment and the manner in which the evidence was received by DFS and subsequently destroyed by MPD; 1-United States Attorney’s Office request to rework two “pre DFS” firearm cases. Occurring during the partial federal government shutdown, the request was ultimately granted.

ANAB accreditation documents were received December 2018, confirming continuation of accreditation in all the lab disciplines, inclusive of digital evidence and forensic chemistry “Heroin Quant.” This year, there will be a concerted effort to obtain accreditation of the Latent Fingerprint Unit Chem Lab.

The Quality team has initiated a large scale project dedicated to rewriting and reorganization of 17025, 2005 accreditation standards, to meet compliance with 2017 standards by October, 2019. The review team is made up of DFS staff volunteers whom are scheduled to receive training and guidance. Estimated completion of the revision project is April 2019.

The Stakeholder Council convened a December 10, 2018, meeting hosted by Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice Kevin Donahue. Stakeholders were briefed about the Science Advisory Board’s recent actions, most notably the work dedicated to the PCAST report and laboratory protocols. The meeting received full support of stakeholders and stakeholder agency representatives.

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As several DFS labs have experienced workload increases during the past year, the Digital Evidence Unit (DEU) has seen its' caseload double. The unit, now accredited, facilitates multiple requests from DFS stakeholders and non-stakeholder agencies.

DFS Forensic Intelligence Unit, in collaboration with D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency Fusion Center, will be the source of a new reporting platform designed to disseminate to first responders, law enforcement, public health officials and other partners advisory and intelligence briefs and bulletins relating to issues affecting local and national security.

The 2017 DFS annual report has received favorable reaction from broad audiences whom expressed interest and curiosity in the work done at DFS. In December 2018, high honor was paid when the curator of the Library of Congress comic book collection contacted DFS to request a copy of the annual report to add to the library's comic book collection.

Dr. Anthony Tran reports a stark contrast in the 588 influenza samples the PHL has collected to date, of which 16 positives were detected, compared to last year's total samples that roughly exceeded 700 over the course of influenza season. The apparent samples surge is due in part to the PHL and D.C. Department of Public Health emphasizing to hospitals the importance for these institutions to submit samples for subtyping.

Under the PHL's STI initiative, a soft launch was conducted of a gonococcal surveillance project dedicated to gonorrhea identification in symptomatic males with urethritis that enter into care and potential treatment at STD clinics within participating jurisdictions (e.g., D.C. Health and Wellness Center, locally).

Although Zika Virus has been reportedly seldom seen, testing by PHL is expected to resume by way of a serology test, a commercially available method. Similar to last year's call to action with Zika Mac Elisa, board members Jordan and Pentella have been requested to review related protocols and the verification study. PHL also has plans to bring genome sequencing to the lab.

Construction in the BSL-3 and the rabies laboratories construction are complete. An open house designed to showcase the lab's updates and suite enhancements is planned for Thursday, January 31, 2019, prior to effecting containment requirements. Chairman Marone suggested that DFS also consider scheduling a tour of the facility by board.

Dr. Luke Short, Chief, Chemistry Section, reports that since March/April 2018, the Forensic Chemistry Unit (FCU) has performed 1043 casework exhibits for the United States Attorney's Office (USAO), the Narcotics and Special Investigations Division (NSID), the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) and the D.C. Department of Corrections (DOC). During this same period, the unit performed more than 900 exhibits from cases usually done by DEA for the United States Attorney's Office and Office of the Attorney General. More recently, the unit expanded its surveillance activities to include performing "ad hoc" surveillance for District



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agencies, primarily consisting of non-court cases involving material found, confiscated or purchased that is integrated into FCU’s controlled lot for testing and data collection.

The District has witnessed an increase in guns created outside a licensed manufacturer and that lack serial numbers, make, model and caliber, usually found on conventionally manufactured firearms. Identified as ‘ghost guns,’ these firearms are constructed by separate components and available by online purchase without restriction. Jonathan Pope, Firearms Examination Unit manager, and Abdel Maliky, Forensic Intelligence Unit manager, delivered a briefing underscoring the safety concerns associated with ghost guns, DFS’ intelligence sharing with National Capital Region law enforcement and criminal justice partners and the legislative measures taken by the District to make illegal the registration and possession of these firearms.

Board member Bumpus reported that synchronization of the FCU protocols review committee was impacted by the partial federal government shutdown and that the committee would be prepared to present its findings for discussion during the April 2019, board meeting. While the FCU protocols are considered to be in great shape, Dr. Short spent a few moments speaking to a few preliminary points identified by the review committee.

Board Chairman Marone proposed that FCU staff and the protocols review committee collectively produce a joint “edits” document that tracks comments and identifies recommendations, responses and area(s) of application. The joint protocols review draft document is anticipated in six weeks.

The next two meetings of the Science Advisory Board will convene Friday, April 26<sup>th</sup> and Friday, July 26<sup>th</sup>, respectively.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

An audio recording of the meeting is available upon request.