



**Department of Forensic Sciences
Science Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
July 26, 2019**

The Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) Science Advisory Board (SAB) meeting was called to order by board chairman Peter Marone at 9:13 a.m. Roll call of Board members present included: Dr. Jeanne Jordan, Dr. Simone N. Gittelson, Ms. Danielle O’Neill, Mr. Robert Thompson and recent board appointee, Ms. Marla Carroll. Mr. John Paul Jones, II and Dr. Michael Pentella participated by way of WebEx conferencing. A quorum was established to conduct board business. Minutes from the January 18, 2019, meeting were presented and read.

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

Dr. Jenifer Smith expressed gratitude on behalf of the Department of Forensic Sciences for the board’s service and informed the body that their work with the PCAST report and DFS protocols were well received when presented during recent training of District defense attorneys. The board was reminded that the group’s contributions are important and valued by broader communities as well as the Department of Forensic Sciences.

The board was introduced to Mr. Darrell Pressley, DFS Communications Director. Mr. Pressley briefly explained his vision for the messaging of work done inside DFS and described some of the experience he has gained during a 25-year public relations career, most recently having served as Deputy Chief of Staff, Public Affairs Specialist and Program Analyst (External Affairs) at the District’s Department of General Services.

After more than six years of District service, Brittany Graham leaves DFS as Deputy Director. In a realignment among the department’s leadership, Ms. Karen Wiggins assumes the position of DFS Acting Deputy Director. In addition to serving as Assistant Forensic Science Laboratory Director, Mr. Wayne Arendse also assumes responsibility of Acting Director of the Forensic Science Laboratory. When advertised, the DFS Deputy Director’s position will be an excepted service position, as the DFS Director’s position, requiring residency in the District. In the restructuring shift, Human Resources and the Forensic Technology Unit reports to the Deputy Director as does Quality and Training. Abdel Maliky, Forensic Intelligence Manager, will also serve as Acting Quality and Training team leader, assisting with evaluating the size teams should be. Recruitment is planned for filling current vacancies for Quality Manager, Training Manager and Forensic Biology Unit Manager (FBU).

The Board was encouraged to inform interested qualified candidates to apply for the DFS Deputy Director position and the Director of the Forensic Science Laboratory position.

Dr. Smith briefly discussed the department’s present inventory tracking systems (FileOnQ, JusticeTrax) and an upcoming Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) project



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designed to unite existing DFS laboratory information systems. It was proposed that the Board is afforded an opportunity to meet with the contractor group leading the LIMS project.

Ms. Jessica Beckman, Latent Fingerprint Unit (LFU) Manager, reported on the unit's technological advancement in the acquisition, planning and this year's implementation of the MIDEO system, the unit's move to image management and digital analysis of all latent prints. LFU analysts now have the ability to show how conclusions were achieved and the technology enables the development of automated worksheets and reports, processes currently performed through LIMS. Ms. Beckman and LFU Technical Lead Scientist Andrew Reitnauer conducted a demonstration of the distinctive tools that accompany the MIDEO system.

The inclusion of MIDEO and the training manual in LFU SOPs are anticipated by September 2019, at which time they will be distributed to the Board for review. In the meantime, LFU's current SOP's will be forwarded to Board members O'Neill and Thompson for review.

Recommendations and results from the SAB digital evidence committee's review of Digital Evidence Unit (DEU) Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were addressed during a comprehensive discussion led by DEU manager Tracy Walraven. SAB members and the review committee, headed by Board member Jones, commended DEU for the meticulous effort unit staff devoted to the SOPs.

DFS Acting Deputy Director Karen Wiggins provided the schedule of Quality Assurance and 17025 2017 accreditation activities:

- 1. July 1-15, 2019**
Forensic Science Laboratory and Forensic Chemistry Unit Annual Internal Audit
- 2. July 23, 2019**
Annual Management Review meetings for Forensic Biology Unit and Latent Fingerprint Unit
- 3. July 30, 2019**
Annual Management Review meeting for Firearms Examination Unit, Digital Evidence Unit and Forensic Chemistry Unit
- 4. August 14-16, 2019**
ANAB Onsite Surveillance visit
 - QAS
 - Evidence Processing – Preliminary assessment
- 5. August 26-30, 2019**
ANAB Offsite Surveillance visit
 - Forensic Science Laboratory
 - Forensic Chemistry Unit



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The Public Health Laboratory anticipates recertification of its select agent and toxins (Bioterrorism program) section during the fall of 2019. Minimal issues were found during a verification inspection conducted approximately one year ago in relation to the 3-year cycle recertification.

The Forensic Chemistry Section has expanded and now covers multiple disciplines, notably crime scene chemistry testing (ISO 17025 accreditation) and clinical testing (CLIA), formerly found within the chemical terrorism domain as part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Laboratory Response Network (LRN). It is expected that a slight name change from the Biomonitoring and Analytical Chemistry Unit to the Clinical Toxicology Unit is imminent to reflect inclusion of the toxicology work and future work with drugs of abuse.

Staffed at capacity, the Chemistry Section's surveillance program activities have increased substantially each month, according to Dr. Luke Short, Chemistry Section Chief. The Chemistry team is aiming for 100% coverage of all heroine seized in the District, having accomplished this goal twice this year. In recent monthly reporting to D.C. Health, the Chief Medical Examiner, CDC and other customers, the Chemistry section has encountered heroin most among opioids found in the District. Fentanyl was found to represent nearly half of all opioids.

Dr. Anthony Tran, Public Health Laboratory Director, presented an update on Epidemiology-Laboratory Capacity (ELC) funding, effectively receiving an increase over the course of five fiscal years. However, while the lab received a 42% increase in funding for Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) supplies, new funding for Mycotics to focus on *C. auris* and *Aspergillus fumigatus* diagnostics and new funding for vaccine preventable diseases, there was a 37% decrease in funding for arbovirus surveillance (Zika, mosquitos, ticks) supplies from last year, a decrease in funding for ELC-funded staff, resulting in a loss of positions, and no funding received for legionella supplies. There is reason to believe the loss of positions have impacted both small state labs and larger facilities nationwide. The current cooperative agreement concludes in July when the first year of the 5-year cycle cooperative agreement begins.

The Public Health Laboratory reports over 1,148 confirmed measles cases in 30 states in 2019 to date. While there have been no reported cases in the District, PHL is equipped to conduct most measles virus infection testing in-house, providing a diagnosis the same-day as submission. Positive samples would be sent to CDC for typing and vaccine versus natural infection differentiation.

In June 2019, the Public Health Laboratory was selected to serve as a host site for the CDC's Laboratory Leadership Service (LLS), a 2-year fellowship program designed to prepare high caliber doctoral scientists to become public health laboratory leaders. LLS candidate interviews will be conducted October/November 2019, and the host site/LLS match will be announced December 2019.



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Board Protocol Review Schedule:

- July 2019 - Latent Fingerprint Unit (LFU) Protocol Review
- October 2019 - Forensic Biology Unit (FBU) Protocol Review

Chairman Marone requested that the board receives the current DFS organizational chart and that the curriculum vitae of all SAB members be distributed to the board.

There was an engaging discussion concerning employee retention and the management of physical and emotional responses to workplace pressures and stress of employees before the meeting was adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

An audio recording of the meeting is available upon request.