

Coroner Update

May 11, 2021

9:30 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Erik Martin, Katie Conradi

Guest(s): Nic Scott, Bill Serrahn

Recorder: Tammy Martin

YTD cases: 335 cases that include 0 homicides, 3 suicides, 10 accidental deaths, 3 undetermined deaths, 5 deaths pending toxicology, 10 cases were department assisted, 1 case that was public assisted, 21 autopsies have been performed this year (average 50 a year) and, 6 drug-related overdoses.

Warren met with Fleet Services Manager Tim Murphy to discuss vehicle usage. The Coroner's Office currently has one vehicle, but with the increase of FTEs, they will need to increase the Office's contribution to its Equipment Repair & Replacement (ERR) plan to \$500 monthly to pay for a new vehicle. Purchasing a vehicle would save on funds versus leasing a vehicle from Fleet Services.

Last month, Warren McLeod spoke to the training and this month he wanted the commissioners to know what they do. Law enforcement notifies the coroner as needed. They respond to the scene and interview the responding officer, to the emergency medical teams that responded, they introduce themselves to the family and then conduct interviews with everyone. They have a thorough investigation with pictures and fixed points, scene sketches and photographs. Decedent documentation is performed to mark wounds and other marks. They glove up and perform a head to toe exam. Looking for wounds, defects, and any bleeding. They check for injuries or changes. They check the whole body thoroughly and look for postmortem changes in liver mortis and rigor mortis. They have to make a preliminary determination. They treat every case as a homicide and work the scene to determine the actual cause based on the scene and details. The cooperation between the Coroner's Office and the department responding is very valuable. The Coroner's Office also has to determine next of kin and transfer services for the decedent. They do a secondary exam if the decedent is transferred to the Coroner's Office. They have to notify the next of kin and they typically do this with a chaplain. Most of cases notifying next of kin are from traffic fatalities. DNA is no longer an option to identify a decedent. A complete narrative is written. A typical autopsy takes between 2.5 – 4 hours. Child homicides take closer to 10 hours to complete.

Warren wanted the Board to know that training and certification of a deputy coroner is through the American Board of Legal Death Investigators.

Warren said if another FTE was added to his office, the efficiency would be extended for those having days off or the graveyard shift. This would have 160 hours covered in a week out of 168. The other 8 hours would be covered by casual employees.

Commissioner Swope asked if the amount of drug overdoses were equal in gender. There is no age limit to drug overdose. Warren said based on Spillman notifications, approximately 3 people a day call in to 911 to report self-harm either for themselves or someone else. Commissioner Swope did ask how the coroner deputies handle the stress of the job. Warren said they debrief and talk about their experiences. The Coroner's Office also has a monthly training a stress training and the more the individuals talk about their experiences, the less traumatic the experience becomes.

Generally with a drug overdose death, prescription overdose is ruled as accidental, suicidal, or undetermined.

Warren is still trying to find an appropriate time to inter indigent remains. There are currently 7 people from this year and others from the previous year that were unable to be interred due to COVID-19.

Meeting ended: 10:02 a.m.