

**NEW MEXICO BOARD OF MEDICAL INVESTIGATORS**  
DRAFT MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING- March 7, 2022

NM Office of the Medical Investigator  
The University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center  
\*\*VIRTUAL MEETING\*\*

**BOARD PRESENT:**

<b>David Scrase</b> <i>Board Chair</i>	Acting Cabinet Secretary, New Mexico Dept. of Health
<b>Tim Johnson</b> <i>Board Secretary</i>	Chief, New Mexico State Police
<b>Michael Richards</b> <i>Board Member</i>	Interim Dean, UNM School of Medicine
<b>Lynn Trujillo</b> <i>Board Member</i>	Cabinet Secretary, New Mexico Dept. of Indian Affairs

**ATTENDEES:**

Natalie Adolphi, PhD	Director of the Center for Forensic Imaging, OMI
Albert Arocha	Supervisor of Technical Services, OMI
La Vonda Bowens Woodard	Interim Director of Operations, OMI
Anthony Cervantes	Unit Administrator 1, OMI
Lauren Decker, MD	Medical Investigator, OMI
Jodi McGinnis Porter	NM Human Services Dept.
Monica Eshner	HR Administrator 2, OMI
Jennifer Fulton	Administrative Assistant 3, OMI
Heather Jarrell, MD	Chief Medical Investigator, OMI
Billy Jimenez	New Mexico Dept. of Health
Peter Loomis, DDS	Forensic Odontologist, OMI
Sara Navarrette	Assoc University Counsel, UNM
Rebecca Romans	Senior Operations Manager, OMI
Alexandra Sanchez	Public Information Officer, UNM HSC
Scot Sauder	Deputy University Counsel, UNM HSC
Chuck Smith	Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team

\*\* This is a preliminary draft of the March 7, 2022, minutes as interpreted by the clerk of the board for use in preparing the official minutes. It is expected that there will be corrections, additions, and/or omissions before the final minutes are reviewed and officially approved by the Board of Medical Investigators. \*\*

1. **CALL TO ORDER AND CONFIRMATION OF QUORUM**

Chairman Scrase called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM and confirmed a quorum.

2. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (action item)**

Chairman Scrase called on board members to raise their hand to accept the agenda as presented. All were in favor.

3. **UPDATE ON DMORT MISSION & OMI DECEDENT STORAGE PROGRESS**

Ms. La Vonda Bowens, OMI Interim Director of Operations presented a PowerPoint to update the board on the Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Teams mission (DMORT).

Bernalillo County Cases:

Go Live – March 2, 2022

- 172 Cases sent to Bernalillo county (all cases 7 days or older)
- Progress to Date
  - 10 OMI Clear Licenses transferred to Bernalillo County DMORT Support 3.5.2022.
  - Bernalillo has agreed to purchase investigations software.

Non-Bernalillo County Cases:

Go Live – March 2, 2022

- 93 Cases worked internally on-site by DMORT Staff (all cases 7 days or older)
- Progress to Date
  - 51 – IB paperwork in progress to deliver to counties by Friday, March 11, 2022.
  - 28 – IB/Unclaimed releases conducted since go-live
  - 9 – Potential releases based on family statements
    - DMORT following up week of March 7, 2022
  - 5 – Potential IB's less than 14 days

4. **FEMA TRAILERS AND STATE-OWNED REFRIGERATED TRUCKS**

Chief Medical Investigator, Heather Jarrell noted that a representative from DMORT is in attendance for questions from the board. Dr. Jarrell presented a PowerPoint and summarized an update regarding the refrigerated trucks.

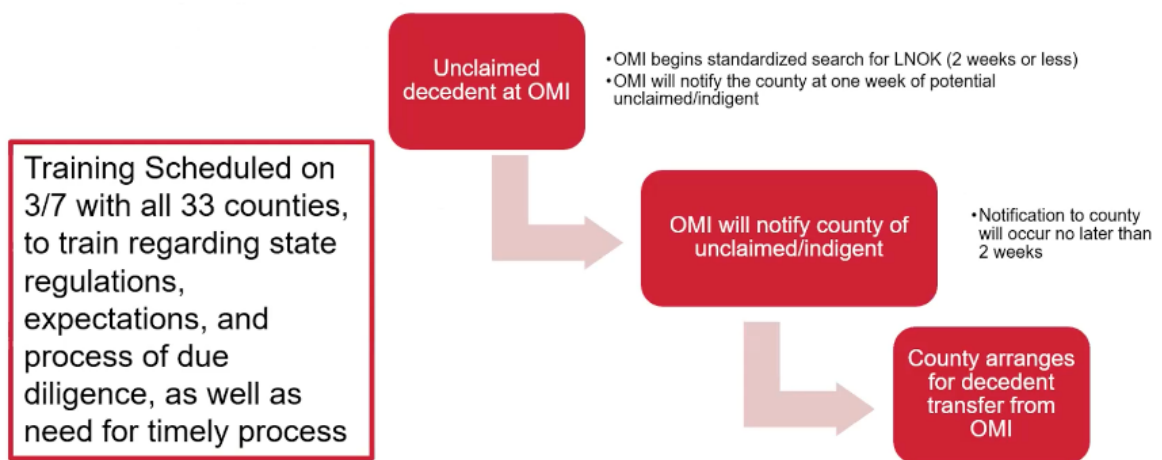
- 4 state-owned, 3 FEMA (1 leaving on 3/14, remaining to be returned by 4/1)
- 2 trailers currently empty
- Each can hold roughly 40 decedents.

Goal: Remove refrigerated trucks from OMI by April 1, 2022

Plan Moving Forward:

- Consolidation of Due Diligence Efforts

-Fully mapping the role of OMI and the counties in the unclaimed/IB process



OMI Staffing Needs:

- **Issue:** Legal Next-of-Kin (LNOK) notification has been the duty of the investigator at OMI.
  1. Increase caseloads and short staffing have not allowed sufficient time to perform this task.
- **Solution:** Create a formal Decedents Affairs Positions (includes a manager) for LNOK notification and death certificate processing.
  1. Created 3 1.0 FTE positions for LNOK searchers) interview have been conducted). These are **dedicated positions for LNOK searches.**
  2. Will utilize 3<sup>rd</sup> party consult service when needed for LNOK searches.

Chairman Scrase inquired if OMI had funding for the new positions. Dr. Jarrell responded that there is no funding for the new positions. Dr. Jarrell called on Dr. Richards to answer. Dr. Richards affirmed that OMI does not have the budget however the UNM School of Medicine (SOM) has directed OMI to fill the positions. UNM Health Sciences Center (HSC) will cover the funding until a plan is developed.

5. **STORAGE FEES**

FEMA/DMORT Recommendation:

- Consider fees associated with storing remains.
  - Implement storage fee for counties and funeral homes for not picking up decedents within one week of notice of unclaimed/indigent decedent.

Dr. Jarrell noted; as mentioned in the prior board meeting, many years ago the board established such fee that is built into the OMI Fee Schedule. The fee has never been implemented. The fee is \$61 for each decedent per 24-hours. A potential unintended consequence would be that the funeral home would charge the fee to the family. Dr. Jarrell stated that she does not want to see this happen. Chairman Scrase recommended that in the next meeting he would like to hear more about implementation of the storage fee. Items would include background on why OMI has not been charging the storage fee, implementation barriers, and what can be done to ensure that the fee does not get passed on to families. Sec. Trujillo agreed. Additionally, Mr. Chairman asked Mr. Billy Jimenez and Scot Sauder to look into options that would prevent the storage fee charged to families.

6. **CREMATION PERMIT REVENUE VERSUS STORAGE FEE REVENUE**

Dr. Jarrell stated that OMI has one of the highest cremation permit fees compared to other medical examiners offices. There was some discussion regarding cremation permit revenue versus storage fee revenue.

7. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Dr. Natalie Adolphi commented. With the increase in case numbers, there has been no delays in completing examinations at OMI.

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Scrase asked for a **MOTION** to adjourn. Sec. Trujillo **MOVED**. Chief Johnson **SECONDED**. All were in favor.

The meeting **ADJOURNED** at 1:51 PM