

**MINUTES**  
**FORENSIC SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

**Date:** August 19, 2019

**Location:** North Carolina State Crime Laboratory

The meeting of the Forensic Science Advisory Board was called to Order at 1:02 p.m. ET by Amanda Thompson. Ms. Thompson performed Roll Call. A quorum was present.

**I. ATTENDANCE**

**Present:** Amanda Thompson, Liz Patel, Jennifer Sligh, David Freehling, Zach Kallenbach, Carroll Pate, Karen Morrow, Alison Gantt, Jody West, Aaron Joncich, John Dilday, Timothy Suggs, and Jennifer Councilman

**Via Teleconference:** Dr. C. Todd Hughey, Adam, Becnel, Tim Kupferschmid, Dr. David Hinks, Dr. Michael Coble, Dr. Demi Garvin, Bethany Pridgen, Jamie Becker, Alka Lohmann, Kermit Channell, Dr. Chris Palenik, Michael Jiroutek, Wayne Lewallen, Sarah Olsen, Ana Baxter, Dr. Tracey Dawson Cruz and Michelle Aurelius

**Others in Attendance:** Marie H. Evitt (Lab Counsel), Adren Harris (Board Counsel) and Angela Towns (Recorder)

**II. MINUTES**

Minutes of the May 15, 2019 meeting were accepted and approved with amendments to add Amanda Thompson, Liz Patel and Jennifer Sligh to the list of attendees, and deletion of the duplicate entry for Timothy Suggs.

**III. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE [Assistant Director Amanda Thompson]**

- New State Crime Lab Director – Vanessa Martinucci, formerly with the Houston Forensic Science Center, will join the State Crime Lab as its new Director on August 26, 2019.
- Awaiting updates from the NC General Assembly regarding Bills previously submitted. A new bill, S315 – *Farm Act of 2019* is pending a PCS on August 20, 2019 on whether to ban smokeable hemp. Testing is expected to occur during the regulation phase with a threshold of .3 THC. The issue for the Lab

would be the inability to distinguish between hemp and marijuana during testing. The matter was presented to the General Assembly explaining that testing would require one piece of equipment for each of the three labs across the state, \$1m, and one year to get up and running. It was also recommended that outsource testing be done until the labs are up and running. Virginia is in collaboration with the DEA for field test kits.

- H996 – *2019 Appropriations Act* – Made crossover with \$3M for testing SAKs in both years of biennium, three (3) forensic scientists for FY19/20, and two (2) forensic scientists for FY20/21. The ball is in the court of the Senate with an anticipated release toward mid- to the end of May.

#### IV. **ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS UPDATE [Assistant Director Amanda Thompson]**

- Active grants remain at \$9.2M with pending notifications totaling \$2.6M. We have a verbal on a couple of these and are simply waiting on the paperwork to come down the pipe.
- Vacancies total 32 with 22 in Raleigh, 3 in the Triad and 3 out West.
- There have been 12 resignations, two (2) retirements and eight (8) new hires since January, 2019.
- On July 11, 2019, OSHR approved posting new positions with minimal education as a means to attract and retain FS-1s, FS-2s, FS-3s, and Supervisor positions. For example, FS-1s were required to have two years of experience, whereas the new requirement drops to zero years of experience.
- Ms. Thompson identified the employee attrition rate at somewhere around 15% resulting from a change in career path to working from home to entering the private sector. She explained further the commonality or trend in an employee's years of experience is 5-6 years, primarily due to the Lab's inability to post promotional opportunities, especially in Toxicology. The Lab has, however, been able to do in-range adjustments according to duties and collateral duties held by scientists. This provision has been used in Forensic Biology, as well as the higher end for FS-1s. The intent is to afford qualified FS-2s and FS-3s the same opportunity.
- Funding for renovation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor has been approved. Architectural drafts are in the process of final review. Demolition of the 4<sup>th</sup> floor will be preceded by the roof replacement which is expected to begin in February 2020 and should be completed in approximately 45 days. The expected completion date of the renovations is 2021. Talks are underway with

management to situate displaced workers on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floors to ensure work is continued in drugs and toxicology.

- Other Projects – John has provided updates on the Digital Document Scanning. The vendor is scanning boxes of legacy case files and delivering them back to the Lab in digital form. The QA staff is currently performing a 100% review of every page and expects to shred documents in the future.
- RFID for Evidence Management – Evidence Control: Forensic Advantage has completed their portion. Preparations to train staff will be made once SCL and other vendors have completed their portion.

**V: SAECK TRACKING AND INVENTORY MANAGEMENT OUTSOURCING  
[Assistant Director Amanda Thompson]**

- Compliance with S.L. 2018-70. Many of the same slides were used in the presentation but numbers were updated.
  - STIMS is **INVOLUNTARY** and went live on October 1, 2018.
    - 1,608 STIMS Registered Users: 1063 Law Enforcement Officers and 545 medical personnel
    - 481 kits in custody of SCL in STIMS
    - 9,081 Named kits in STIMS
    - 218 Anonymous kits in STIMS
  - Outsourcing is **VOLUNTARY** (As of 8/16/2019). The lag time for Lab approval of outsourcing is the time it takes to ship the kits from the vendor lab to the State Lab. We are currently working with a number of agencies in getting kits outsourced.
    - 2,443 SAECKS requested for outsourcing
    - 2,052 SAECKS were approved for testing
    - 833 completed by vendor labs (530 were negative)
    - 180 CODIS hits

**VI. TECHNICAL OPERATIONS UPDATE [Assistant Director Liz Patel]**

- There are 17,723 lab cases to be completed (11K more cases than last year or 400 additional cases per month).
- **Lead time** – 221 days; stable, but need to avoid spiraling out of control.
- **Lean Projects** - Plan to emphasize Lean Projects this Fall to streamline customer needs. Past participants now in management. The Board is

encouraged to offer suggestions of companies already doing these types of projects.

- Currently conducting annual Internal Audits of each section (August-November).
- **Forensic Biology**
  - STRmix Training (in-house) with all biologists and district attorneys, etc. to familiarize them with reporting guidelines (August 26-29, 2019).
  - Continue to work with familial searching validation Fall 2019
  - Conducting training for the Das at their conference October 16-18
  - Kinship testing online 4/2019 (completed validation and testing on 4 cases to date)
- **Drug Chemistry**
  - Currently using Cadillac version of testing but find that the customer is not using all of the data provided. Considering a working group of district attorneys and local/federal prosecutors to determine what can be done to streamline the process. Sought input from board members whose labs might assist to with improving output.
  - Waiting on the fate of SB 352 Farm Act *in regards to “smokeable hemp” definition*. Main argument is whether the ban should be put into place in 2019 or 2020. PCS calls on SBI to validate, but expects the Lab will be involved in the process.
- **Toxicology**
  - Hope to complete QTOF validation in the Fall 2019.
  - Benzodiazepine and Opiate LCMSMS method development
- **Firearms**
  - Another Lean project that needs to be streamlined as one of the oldest cases in the Lab and can go back to over two years.
  - Participated in an ATF / NIBIN working group. Current turnaround time is 16 days.
- **Digital**
  - Digital Evidence: Motor vehicle telematics examinations.
- **Latent**
  - SAFIS / IDEMIA in progress.
- **Trace Evidence**
  - Hair Root hematoxylin procedure has been implemented and will be presented at AAFS in 2020.

- **NC Forensic Expert Outreach**

- Manager Katy Schell gives presentations to different groups on current drug trends in our State. In August, Katy gave a presentation to the Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch of the Division of Public Health. She also will be working with the Justice Academy for their Opioid Podcast.
- Several of our toxicologists including Managers Wayne Lewallen and Aaron Joncich participated in a two-day Continuing Education offering at the conference of DAs entitled “Prosecutors and Language and Testing Procedures for DWI and Non-DWI Evidence in an effort to break down the language barrier between toxicology and district attorneys.
- Manager Josh Hickman (Digital Evidence) is giving a presentation in Portland, OR on his publication on how to extract data from Artificial Intelligence in vehicles.
- Aaron, Wayne, and Liz are going to the Traffic Safety Conference in Raleigh this week.
- NIST tour Evidence Management Steering Committee Tour 7/26
- Timothy Suggs on NC Clerk of Court Working Group on DNA-type evidence management.

**VIII: SCHEDULING OF WINTER BOARD MEETING IN PERSON**

The winter board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 8, 2019, in person. No update on travel arrangements at this time. Jennifer Councilman will make an effort to send out information within one week.

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

With no new business, questions or comments, Chairman Kupferschmid asked for a Motion to adjourn which was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 1:33 p.m.