

# MINUTES

## FORENSIC SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

**Date:** August 3, 2021

**Location:** North Carolina State Crime Laboratory (Via MS Teams)

Chairman Timothy Kupferschmid called the meeting of the Forensic Science Advisory Board to Order at 10:00 A.M. EST. Chairman Kupferschmid mentioned Recognition of guests/Remarks was added to the agenda. Jennifer Councilman performed Roll Call. A quorum was confirmed.

### **I. ATTENDANCE**

**NCSCCL Present:** Amanda Thompson, Timothy Suggs, Liz Patel, Jennifer Councilman, John Dilday, Katy Schell, Zach Kallenbach, Aaron Joncich, Wayne Lewallen, Chris Parker, Jody West, Lindsey D'Amour, Scott Jones, Beth Reagan, and Dave Freehling

**Board Members Via Teleconference:** Tim Kupferschmid, C. Todd Hughey, Michael Coble, Kermit Channell, Alka Lohmann, Mike Jiroutek, Nancy McCombs, Demi Garvin, Adam Becnel, Chris Palenik, Tracy Walraven, and Vanessa Martinucci

**Absent Board Members:** Michelle Aurelius, Tracey Dawson Cruz, and Brian Dew

**Other Teleconference Participants:** Brittney Pinkham (Legal Counsel), Sarah Farber (Guest), Chris Mumma (Guest), Sara Olson (Guest), and Angela Towns (Recorder)

### **II. MINUTES**

Demi Garvin noted "ABC or EFT exam" should be changed to "ABC or ABFT exam" in the last sentence in Section VIII, Paragraph 1. A Motion to accept the May 4, 2021 Minutes as amended was made and approved.

### **III. NCSCCL DIRECTOR'S UPDATE [Vanessa Martinucci]**

#### **Completed Actions:**

- Nine million nonrecurring dollars was included in Governor Cooper's budget for SAECK testing and outsourcing, and \$500K recurring to supplement additional kits

coming into the laboratory, six (6) new scientist positions, and reserve to address compression, equity and high turnover rates DOJ-wide. The Senate's budget included the \$9M for sexual assault kit testing and \$1M non-recurring for in-house testing. House projections are expected to be released next week, followed by the conference budget proceedings.

**In Progress:**

- Changes to Bills in the General Assembly:
  - HB 672 - JPS Oversight Committee Study - DNA Preservation crossed over.
  - HB 674 for additional arrestee charges to be collected for DNA crossed over.
- The budget is still in progress.
- Numbers on previously untested SAK: 16,174 inventoried; 3,391 completed; and 5,194 in process. CODIS hits at 545 (45% hit rate) has been constant thus far.

**IV. IT RELATED UPDATE (John Dilday)**

- **AIS:** All files sent to AIS have been scanned. We received our post-COVID files back. Review team is reviewing the files and storing them into the digital FA system. Reviews are ongoing.
- **STIMS:** We are up to over 6,600 sexual assault kits collected since October 1, 2018 when the system went live. We have identified 16,174 inventory kits, and removed duplicates identified. Our programmers are working on Phase 4 of STIMS development. We completed an internal dashboard for DOJ and are putting the finishing touches on an external dashboard that DOJ can put on their SAKI website.
- **Stop Works and Blood Destructions:** We have identified additional changes needed to the business rules; however, GDAC is consumed with migrating AOC's computer system and unable to assist us at this time.
- **Forensic Advantage:** We have one more tweak to lab report template changes. Expect to complete in the coming weeks.
- **RFID:** We completed our first inventory of evidence using the new RFID inventory process. It was successful. While there are growing pains and a learning curve, it was easier and faster to use. A software enhancement will arrive this Fall that will make inventories easier and faster. We are reviewing the lessons from our first inventory to make the second one even better.

**V. ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS UPDATE [Amanda Thompson]**

**Grants:**

- We are currently sitting at approximately \$8.8M in grant funding which includes \$6.8M active plus the 2021 DNA CEBR Award of \$1,954,978.
- **SAKI Grant:** The lab continues to prompt sending of previously untested sexual assault kits and have moved to the next phases by following up with prosecution and law enforcement regarding hits made to previously untested kits. We are reaching out and gathering that data and encouraging that follow through on CODIS hits as well as outreach to LEAs on the submission of approval forms for partially tested kits. We also identified partially tested kits to look into further under another potential SAKI funding source once testing of the previously untested kits is completed. We identified approximately 6K kits that were partially tested.
- **SAK Dashboard:** As John mentioned, we are working on the development of the SAK dashboard until we are ready to go public.
- **Procurement:** We have established a contract with the vendor to complete four (4) projects by 20 participants with a completion date in October.
- **Renovation/Construction:** Fourth floor renovations began on February 17, 2021, with projected completion in Winter 2021. A quick snapshot of where we started and progress to date was presented. We received approval this morning from the Council of State to renovate the Triad Laboratory. This property will enable us to appropriately house the 10-20 staff. We will move forward with that expansion.
- **Personnel:** NCSCL is sitting at 30 vacancies (20 scientist positions, 10 administrative positions; 10 in Raleigh, 5 in TRL, and 5 in WRL). There have been 12 hires this year to date, with 3 pending hires (scientists which drops vacancies to 17), 8 resignations, and 4 retirements with additional retirements expected early next year.
- **Virtual Recruitment:** We continue to work with media outlets to create training videos and release as much information on all disciplines for recruitment.

## VI. TECHNICAL OPERATIONS UPDATE [Liz Patel]

- **2021 Goals:**
  - Working on a Dashboard to house all information pertinent to the laboratory at your fingertip, i.e., cases worked, cases on hand, etc.
  - Validation Project Tracker and OSAC Registry Tracker – Every time a standard comes up for review, we document it, submit comments, and document internally whether to accept them or not.
  - Lean Projects – Drug Chemistry, Toxicology, Latent and Firearms focused on reducing Lead Time and Turn Around Times for each discipline.
- **Caseload:** Our current caseload as of July 15, 2021 is 23,641 projecting upward. A breakdown of the current caseload on hand: Drug Chemistry is 50% of the case load; Toxicology is 29%; and DNA is the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest at this time.

- **Turnaround Time:** Our lead time (what the customer feels) averages 290 days in all disciplines with an average turnaround time of 67 days to work a case from start to finish lab-wide. Output of exams completed over the last six (6) years has been very productive, despite COVID.
- **Training Update:** July 2020-June 2021, 25 scientists completed training, 13 of which were new hires working in their first discipline. We have 12 scientists now working in their second discipline.
- **Current Training Update:** We have 28 scientists in training [majority in Drug Chemistry and Biology], 20 of which are new hires.
- **Discipline Updates:**
  - **Drug Chemistry:** Doing the Lean Six Project. They will work on a validation project for the testing of benzos.
  - **Digital Evidence:** One (1) forensic scientist completed training in mobile devices; we hired two (2) additional entry-level scientists and converted a position into a computer tech position. That position has been filled and the person trained. Expectation is to have the computer tech person assist with mobile devices to free up the scientist to work more complex cases.
  - **Latent Evidence:** We have the Lean Six Project; completed footwear validations and updated the results. The procedures are now live and finishing a Foray upgrade. We ran into some issues with computer technology and Windows upgrades, certificates, etc., but we are hopefully nearing the end of the Foray upgrade.
  - **Forensic Biology:** There are a number of projects going on simultaneously working through outsource cases (sex kits and DNA cases). Validation of COSTAR and Quant Studio are in the works.
  - **DNA Database:** The system is being upgraded to Office 365.
  - **Firearms:** We updated procedures and they are now live. The first step is to process NIBIN entries when the case comes in the door.
  - **Toxicology:** There are four (4) scientists in various stages of training. QTOF implementation has been beneficial; we have -completed the new GD-FID/MS validation. We have implemented the MassHunter software . Everyone has received training.
  - **Trace Evidence:** We are still contemplating the ABC exam. Spoke with ABC and plan to push approximately eight (8) people through at the end of this year for training in all ABC disciplines. The Trace exam will be archived in the next year or so. Consequently, those persons will switch to the Comprehensive Criminalistics.

**VII: QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:**

There were no questions or comments by the Board.

**XIII: RECOGNITION OF GUESTS/REMARKS**

**Sara Olson:** What is the status of the Forensic Science Advisory Board's review of new procedures adopted by the lab?

**Chairman Kupferschmid** responded the FSAB plans to start a new review in the Fall.

**IX. FALL MEETING:**

The Fall meeting will be held via MS Teams at 10:00 a.m. on October 5, 2021. Jennifer will send out official invites.

**X: ADJOURNMENT:**

With there being no other business, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 A.M. EST.