

**MINUTES
FORENSIC SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

Date: October 8, 2019

Location: North Carolina State Crime Laboratory

Chairman Timothy Kupferschmid called the meeting of the Forensic Science Advisory Board to Order at 10:00 a.m. ET and performed Roll Call. A quorum was present.

I. ATTENDANCE

Present: Tim Kupferschmid, David Hinks, Adam Becnel, Jamie Becker, C. Todd Hughey, Michael Coble, Bethany Pridgen, Michelle Aurelius, Michael Jiroutek, Demi Garvin, Chris Palenik, Kermit Channell, Amanda Thompson, Vanessa Martinucci, Timothy Suggs, Liz Patel, John Dilday, Chris Parker, Alison Gantt, Aaron Joncich, Ana Baxter, Jim Trevillian, Wayne Lewallen, David Freehling, Katy Schell, Zach Kallenbach, Jody West, Jennifer Slish, Sarah Olsen, Karen Morrow, Matthew Wood, and Jennifer Councilman

Others in Attendance: Leslie Cooley Dismukes (Board Counsel), Jason Caccamo (Lab Counsel) and Angela Towns (Recorder)

II. MINUTES

The Minutes for the May 15, 2019 meeting were already approved. A Motion was to approve the August 19, 2019 minutes [as amended] was made and seconded. Amendments were as follows:

- Bottom of Page 1, Section III, No. 2: Add “%” after .3
- Pending notifications total \$2.1M in Active grants – not \$2.6M

III. DIRECTOR’S UPDATE [Vanessa Martinucci]

- **New State Crime Lab Director** – Vanessa Martinucci, formerly with the Houston Forensic Science Center, joined the State Crime Lab as its new Director on August 26, 2019. Jennifer Councilman administered the Oath of Office to Director Martinucci.

- **Meetings:**
 - Open Forum between the NC State Crime Lab and IDS is complete.
 - Meetings in progress:
 - 10/15/2019 - Conference of District Attorneys
 - 10/18/2019 – District Court Judges
 - 01/13/2020 – Chief of Police
 - Meetings still pending:
 - Sheriffs, Superior Court Judges, Clerks of Superior Court, Public Defenders, NC Bar Association, NC Advocates for Justice, et al.
- S315 – *Farm Act of 2019* made the crossover; however, the Senate failed to concur with amendments from the House (10/1/19). The SCL is requesting additional funding to distinguish smokable hemp from marijuana.
- (Ch. SL 2019-221) – Survivor Act - \$6M over two fiscal years. LEA's are required to submit newly collected kits to the SCL within 45 days. LEA will perform case reviews to prioritize testing on kits collected prior to January 1, 2018. CODIS hit follow-up provided to lab by officers upon arrest and DAs upon conviction.
- Areas of Concern: Digital Section, Firearms Section, Additional Positions, and Full-time Legal Counsel.
- **Bills Currently at the NC General Assembly:**
 - (Ch. SL 2019-150) – *Lab Fees* S155/H323. H323 signed by Governor on July 22, 2019.
 - S168 – *Expand Allowed Medical Uses/Cannabis Extract* made the crossover; Referred to House Rules, Calendar, and Operations June 17, 2019.
 - S352 – *Amend Controlled Substances Act* made the crossover. Referred to House Rules, Calendar, and Operations July 17, 2019, but appears to be dead for this session.
 - S425 – *Clarify DNA Result Would Have Changed Verdict* made crossover. Referred to House Rules, Calendar, and Operations June 12, 2019.
 - H813 - *Howard Hunter, Jr., Eastern Crime Lab* made the crossover. Referred to Senate Rules and Operations May 6, 2019.
 - H834 - *Ban the Box* did not make the crossover. Uncertain if there is a Senate version, but appears to be dead this session.

- H966 - *2019 Appropriations Act* allows for five forensic scientists. The Governor vetoed the bill with a House override. Uncertain if Senate will override?

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS UPDATE [Assistant Director Amanda Thompson]

- Active grants total \$11.1M with \$2.6 having already been awarded.
- The SAKI working group has weekly temp calls and bi-monthly State Crime Lab meetings to discuss the progress of SAKI/GCC progress. On August 10, 2019, there was a two-year renewal of SAKI and VOCA grants.
- There are 34 total vacancies (21 scientists, 12 administrative and 1 FSM with 23 in vacancies in Raleigh, 7 in the West and 4 in the Triad.
- Initial construction plans for the 4th floor will be sent to SCO. The water event set for September 21-22 requires SCO involvement, estimated at \$250K. Capital R&R requests include building envelope study of RCL, and renovating Evidence Control and Firearms Section of RCL.
- There will be 10 internal promotions expected across all Labs in Toxicology, two temporary background investigator hires, and the development of an SCL Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace Policy is in the works.
- A total of \$598,849.49 has been requested for state-funded equipment purchases for TRL/WRL Tox, TRL, Raleigh Tox, Raleigh/WRL/TRL Tox, Raleigh and WRL Firearms, Trace, and Raleigh Drug Chemistry.
- Ms. Thompson explained employee attrition is the result of changes in career paths to working from home to entering the private sector. Plans for improvement include an increase in FS-1 salaries from \$42,709 to \$46K+, and reduction in education to 0 years of experience as a means to repair disparities. The Committee will explore salaries and report back to the Board.

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

- SAECK Tracking and Inventory Management System is served on DPS SAECKS Working Group.
 - STIMS is **INVOLUNTARY** and went live on October 1, 2018.
 - 1,720 STIMS Registered Users: 1144 Law Enforcement Officers and 576 medical personnel
 - 1820 kits in custody of SCL in STIMS

- 10,739 Named kits in STIMS
- 258 Anonymous kits in STIMS
- Outsourcing for previously untested SAECKS identified in the 2017 Statewide Audit is currently **VOLUNTARY**.
 - 2,729 SAECKS requested for outsourcing
 - 2,528 SAECKS were approved for testing
 - 904 completed by vendor labs (634 were negative)
 - 270 entered in CODIS
 - 203 CODIS hits to date

VI. TECHNICAL OPERATIONS UPDATE [Assistant Director Liz Patel]

- There are 17,723 lab cases to be completed.
- Lead time – 222 days. Turnaround time per exam – 70 days. Most examinations can be completed through rush program within 30 days.
- Lean Projects – There has been an increase in casework by approximately 400 request more per month lab-wide. Also conducting annual Internal Audits of each section for quality control.
- Forensic Biology
 - STRmix Training (in-house) for DA’s and Defense Services
 - Familial searching validation in the Fall of 2019
 - Conducting training for the DA’s at their conference October 16-18, 2019
 - Kinship testing available online April 2019.
- DNA Database – Y-STR validation is complete.
- Drug Chemistry
 - Studying current drug chemistry sampling plan and making adjustments accordingly to improve output.
 - Waiting on the fate of SB 352 Farm Act *in regards to “smokeable hemp” definition.*
- **Toxicology**
 - Hope to complete QTOF validation in the Fall 2019.
 - Benzodiazepine and Opiate LCMSMS method development
- **Firearms**
 - Evaluating a Lean Project for comparison casework.
- **Digital**

- Digital Evidence: Motor vehicle telematics examinations.
- Posting of FSM of Section.
- **Latent**
 - SAFIS / IDEMIA completed.
- **Trace Evidence**
 - Hair Root hematoxylin procedure has been implemented and will be presented at AAFS in 2020.

VIII: SCHEDULING OF WINTER TELECONFERENCE MEETING

The Winter Teleconference will take place on Tuesday, February 11, 2020 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. EST. The Spring (In-person) meeting is scheduled for May 5-6, 2020 in Raleigh, NC.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- The SCL reported that Jason Caccamo was handling a case pertaining to videotaping examination. A draft was distributed to the Board for review. The Board was asked to review the case and report back prior to Jason's appearance before the Judge on October 21, 2019.
- This is Bethany Pridgen's last meeting as her term expires at the end of 2019. Ms. Pridgen resigned and received a Certificate of Appreciation.

With no further new business, questions or comments, a Motion to adjourn was seconded at 11:20 a.m.