

FORENSIC SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Date: February 1, 2022

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. 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, Dave Freehling, Alison Gantt, Karen Morrow, Jennifer Slish, Jason Caccamo and Julie Butler

Board Members Via Teleconference: Tim Kupferschmid, C. Todd Hughey, Kermit Channell, Alka Lohmann, Demi Garvin, Adam Becnel, Chris Palenik, Tracey Dawson Green, Tracy Walraven, Michelle Aurelius, Nancy McCombs, Brian Dew, and Vanessa Martinucci

Absent Board Members: Mike Jiroutek and Michael Coble

Other Teleconference Participants: Boz Zellinger, (Board Counsel), Andy Evans (Guest), Sara Olson (Guest), and Marvin Boone-Pittman (Recorder)

II. MINUTES

The October 5, 2021 Minutes were sent to the Board for review. Comments were made and corrections were made accordingly. With no further corrections, the Minutes of October 5, 2021, were approved.

III. NCSCCL DIRECTOR'S UPDATE [Vanessa Martinucci]

Completed Actions:

- The biennium budget has been signed allocating eight (8) additional scientists; \$9M non-recurring for vendors for SAECK testing and \$500K recurring for internal testing; and \$1M to outsource evidence and training in other disciplines.

- A 2021 lab-wide meeting was held on MS Teams consisting of summaries on what each section achieved over the course of the year – both wins and losses.
- Director Martinucci has been appointed to the NC Statewide Impaired Driving Task Force. As part of the Governor’s Highway Safety Program and the Highway Traffic Safety Administration, appointees across the state have been asked to provide viewpoints and recommendations for changes to impaired driving laws, or other things that can be done as it relates to impaired driving, fatalities, etc.

In Progress:

- Posting eight (8) new forensic scientist positions along with other positions that are open.
- Continuing to prepare for the ANAB reassessment in April.
- Working through previously untested SAKs: 16,227 inventoried; 4,945 completed; 4,398 in process; and 1,840 profiles in CODIS with 738 hits (40%).

IV. IT RELATED UPDATE (John Dilday)

- **Legacy File Scanning:** Continuing to review the legacy paper cases that were scanned by the vendor and saved into Forensic Advantage which makes cases searchable on-demand going forward. Our team is continuing to scan Forensic Advantage files in the lab, examination files pulled from State Archives, and uploading those as well.
- **STIMS:** Latest stats were provided: Medical – 747; Law Enforcement – 1,538; District Attorneys – 76; Kits since 10/1/2018: 6,899 (named); 839 (anonymous); and 16,227 (inventory). The number of users and kits continues to increase over time.
- We are in Stage 4 development for the STIMS application. Testing should be completed today. If all goes well, we will schedule resources to perform upgrades over the next week or so.
- The SAK dashboard has been finalized for the NC DOJ SAKI public website. Kits will be available to the public once the site goes live.
- **Forensic Advantage:** We have been working on lab report templates for quite some time. We are waiting on a change to the application which unfortunately takes longer than changing a template. We completed our second round of inventories with our RFID system in December, so that system continues to get easier and faster as our system develops. The main slowdown with our inventory is being addressed in the next upgrade which will make it better, faster, and easier to do inventory. We have the latest version of FA in our test environment and developed a test plan on a first pass. Our questions have been submitted to the vendor and we are awaiting feedback. Once the issue is resolved, we will move to the second round of lab-wide testing and begin prepping for an upgrade later this Spring as we continue to work on closing out old tickets with the vendor.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS UPDATE [Amanda Thompson]

Grants:

- We are sitting at approximately \$7.5M in funding. Our \$2M SAKI grant is in its 4th year and ends in September 2022; 2021 DNA CEBR of \$1,696,313 ends in September 2022. Work through this grant includes making sure all untested SAKs are moving through the phases, being identified through notices to law enforcement agencies and vendors for outsource testing. We completed our identification of the partially tested kits. No more work is needed on those until additional sources for SAKI funding are secured and the conclusion of all previously untested kits have been processed. We have exhausted all of our outsourced funding for SAKI outsources analysis of \$1M under this grant was exhausted approximately two months ago and we have now moved on to the appropriated funds provided by the General Assembly. No break in outsourcing; just continuing under another funding source. Also continuing reviews of outsourced cases using employees and FTEs. We continue to review outsourced data through SAKI OT through employees to keep that time as close as possible. The SAK dashboard is still in process with a vendor through our SAKI grant as well. We are waiting on final edits from that vendor to signify completion which will then go to our funding source for approval before it goes live. We will share the dashboard with the Board once it reaches its final stage.
- **Renovation/Construction:** We are finishing up our renovations of the 4th floor in the Raleigh lab which was a complete gutting of approximately 18,000 square feet to renovate for Drug Chemistry and Toxicology. Once you step off the elevator, you have the conference room, and hallway in both directions. Cubicles will be installed in the next few weeks.
- **Personnel:** NCSCS is sitting at 29 vacancies (17 scientist positions, 12 administrative positions; 20 in Raleigh, 5 in TRL, and 4 in WRL). Eight (8) positions have been provided by the General Assembly and we are in the process of being assigned to different disciplines with postings to occur in late February. Some positions will allow for promotions for internal candidates. Thus far in 2022, we have two pending hires; 3 resignations and 3 pending retirements with more possible retirements of employees with 30 years of service slated for later in the year. In Summer 2021, we were sitting at 20 hires, 11 resignations, and 5 retirements with an average monthly vacancy rate of 29 and a retention rate of 10%.

VI. TECHNICAL OPERATIONS UPDATE [Liz Patel]

- **2022 Goals:**
 - **Dashboard:** Continuing on with the Dashboard we are working on with our IT department to try and gather statistics for our laboratory. Expect to do outreach using virtual webinars for our stakeholders. We still travel to departments and lawyer groups, eg, Conference of DAs, etc., to get

them trained but are looking to move to a virtual platform to give us a broader reach specifically for law enforcement agencies where they may have more turnover and we can get that training out in a recorded manner and people can watch it continuously.

- Focus on process improvements, continuing on from the Lean training we completed with a focus on Drug Chemistry, Toxicology, Latent, and Firearms.
- **Caseload:** Our current caseload is 24,306 pending exams: 53% in Drug Chemistry, Toxicology 26%, and Biology has the next largest at 5%. We are starting to see a leveling off in cases pending. We had been gradually increasing over the last two years, but hopefully, the trend will go down.
- **Lead Time:** Lead time versus turnaround time what the customer feels is the lead time on average for the entire lab is 293 days. The turnaround time for an analyst to actually complete an exam is 67 days. Historical data of cases completed by the lab in usually the 3rd and 4th quarter, we do see a decrease in the output due to vacations and holidays, etc.
- **Training Update:** We have a lot of people in training: approximately 32 scientists in training and anticipate two more being signed off this week at the completion of their mock trials. Scientists have completed 14 training programs in the last six months: 19 new scientists; 13 are in current disciplines and training in a second one.

VII: QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

Demi Garvin inquired as to the frequency of meetings of the Statewide Impaired Driving Task Force and the number of meetings that have been held to date. Director Martinucci responded the meetings are quarterly, and she has attended two (2) meetings thus far. Ms. Garvin also asked if the \$1M for outsourcing is new money and recurring. Dr. Martinucci replied the \$1M is new money and non-recurring and will be used for training for Digital and Firearms.

XIII: PROCEDURE REVIEW:

Chairman Kupferschmid explained procedure review will be addressed in phases in teams of three (3): Toxicology is one; Forensic Biology is the second, and Latent Evidence is the third. Toxicology has requested additional time to complete its review. Chairman Kupferschmid requested a status update from Forensic Biology, DNA Database, and Latent Evidence groups on how their reviews are going.

Kermit Channell indicated his group started the review, are going back through the spreadsheet, but still has a ways to go. Adam Becnel provided an update for Latent Evidence. Mr. Becnel reported he is almost done reviewing Latent but needs a little more time. Most of his comments are in the spreadsheet, but he has not reached out to other team members to see where they are. It was determined more time is needed in order to do a thorough job, with a completion

deadline of May 1. Once Phase One is completed, we will begin Phase Two which is Firearms, Digital Evidence, and Evidence Control.

IX. RECOGNITION OF GUESTS/REMARKS

Andy Evans and Sara Olson were recognized as guests at the meeting.

XV. SPRING MEETING:

The Spring meeting is tentatively scheduled and will be held in person (tentatively) at 10:00 a.m. on May 10, 2022.

X: ADJOURNMENT:

With there being no other business, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at _____ a.m. EST.