

**BOARD OF CORONERS MEETING
FREMONT COUNTY SHERIFFS OFFICE
LANDER, WY
WEDNESDAY JUNE 18, 2008**

A Coroner's Board meeting was held in the EOC room of the Fremont County Sheriff's Office on June 18, 2008 at 10:10 am. Tom Eekhoff called meeting to order and presided. A quorum was established.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Dr. Patrick Allen, McKee Medical Center, Loveland, CO
Dale S. Majhanovich, Sweetwater County Coroner
Tom Eekhoff, Campbell County Coroner
Mike Bryant, Bryant Funeral Home, Worland
Mike Blonigen, Natrona County District Attorney
Skip Hornecker, Fremont County Sheriff

MEMBERS ABSENT

Marty Luna, Laramie County Coroner

STAFF PRESENT

Betty Haukap, POST Director
Ken Nelson, Assistant Attorney General

GUESTS

Mark Stratmoen, Fremont County Deputy Coroner
Mark O. Harris, Fremont County Deputy Coroner
Sharma Sonntag, Fremont County Sheriffs Office
Dr. James Thorpen, Natrona County Coroner
Ed McAuslan, Fremont County Coroner & Coroners Association President

PRESENTATION

A signed plaque was presented by Tom Eekhoff to Dr. James Thorpen for his years of dedicated service to the Board of Coroners. Dr. Thorpen has been a member since 1984.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Tom Eekhoff opened nominations for Chairman.

Skip Hornecker nominated Tom Eekhoff as Chairman. Mike Blonigen made a motion to cease nominations. Skip Hornecker seconded the motion. Nominations were closed. All members voted in favor and the motion carried.

Chairman Eekhoff opened nominations for Vice Chairman.

Mike Blonigen nominated Skip Hornecker. Skip Hornecker respectfully declined the nomination due to number of prior commitments.

Skip Hornecker nominated Marty Luna as Vice Chairman. Mike Blonigan made a motion to cease nominations. Skip Hornecker seconded the motion. Nominations were closed. All members voted in favor and the motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mike Bryant questioned the old minutes regarding a deputy coroner maintaining certification when a new coroner is elected. There are no current rules on deputies maintaining certifications if a new coroner does not want to retain them as a. Possible options were discussed but it was determined that no rule should be made to cover this and that the Coroner's Association would make it common knowledge if an individual wanted to maintain their certification, they would have to be employed by a Wyoming county coroner's office.

Skip Hornecker made a motion to cease the discussion and Dale Majhanovich seconded. All were in favor and the motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Betty Haukap advised the rules have been out for public comment, no public comments were received. Mike Bryant requested clarification on what accreditation of roll call training was in Chapter IV, Section 3(b)(iii). Ken Nelson stated that debriefing is considered roll call training.

Mike Bryant made a motion to adopt the rules as presented and Mike Blonigen seconded. All were in favor and the motion carried. Rules will be sent to the State for approval.

NEW BUSINESS

A letter "Coroner Duties to Vital Records" written by Assistant Attorney General Travis Kirchhefer and addressed to the Wyoming Coroners Association was opened for discussion. The letter requesting on the behalf of the Department of Health, Vital Records Service that the Coroner's Association and membership cease and desist the practice of refusing to file medical certifications as "pending". Failure to do so will result in further action by the Attorney General's Office.

Mike Blonigen interrupted the letter to say that the vital records department wants death certificates marked pending if unable to complete within a 3 day time frame. The Coroner's view is if "pending" death certificates are sent and a cause of death has not yet been identified, it increases the paperwork for the Coroners to complete once official documentation is available. Also, the "pending" death certificate has no value for the family until the cause of death is listed. The family cannot do any official transactions with banks or other entities with a pending certificate. The 3 day rule is not sufficient time for Coroner's offices to receive any toxicology or pathologist reports.

Ed McAuslan advised that he spoke with the vital records office and the reason behind their need for notification is to mark the birth certificate deceased in case of identity theft.

Mike Blonigen will read the statue to determine its power and report to the Coroner's association meeting in Lusk on July 9, 2008. He will send an email out to his associates to see if anyone has looked into this matter, however the Attorney General's office may file for some legal action to make coroners follow the 3 day rule.

Ken Nelson stated that this Board could request an opinion, from the Attorney General however, the opinion would not be available by July 9th.

A suggestion was made to invite Pete Illowy to the association meeting on July 9, 2008 to discuss this matter and to ask what penalty applies to violation of the discussed rules.

Possible litigation pending in Washakie County may impact board decisions as far as rules updates.

Chairman Eekhoff proposed moving forward with standards for coroners. He suggested focusing on five basic functions to include; DNA, toxicology, external exam, inventory, and photography, in an attempt to simplify standards. Coroners need the freedom to investigate and should have a standard to follow.

Skip Hornecker made a motion to have the Coroners Association establish a standards committee to discuss the coroner standards and prepare a final draft during the Association's September, 2008 meeting. The Association would then submit their proposed standards to the Board of Coroners Standards for their approval at the Board of Coroners Standards meeting in December, 2008. Mike Bryant seconded the motion. Ed McAuslan agreed to look into getting opinions from outside experts and to have the Coroner's Association write the proposed standards. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Chairman Eekhoff made a motion to adjourn. Mike Bryant seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharma L. Sonntag
Communications Supervisor
Fremont County Sheriff's Office

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