

Approved: [Signature]
Superior Court Judge
Date: 9/16/14

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SONOMA
SEP 26 2014

**Board of Supervisors Response to
"Sheriff-Coroner's Office and Morgue Inspection" Grand Jury Report**
BY [Signature]
Deputy Clerk

FINDINGS

F1. The close to 400 delinquent final autopsy reports due from FMG (Forensic Medical Group) show a lack of effective oversight by the Sheriff-Coroner's Office.

The Board disagrees partially with this finding. While it is correct that at the time of the investigation there were approximately 400 delinquent final autopsy reports, Sheriff's Office staff has worked diligently with Forensic Medical Group to address this backlog. The Board acknowledges that the nationwide shortage of Forensic Pathologists and continues to support the Sheriff's office in the efforts to recruit and retain additional professional resources in this area.

F2. The Sheriff-Coroner's Office has not exercised means within its control to bring about the timely issuance of final autopsy reports by imposing the 2-percent daily fine for overdue reports.

The Board disagrees partially with this finding. While the Sheriff's Office has not imposed the fines allowed in the contract, they have taken several steps, in consultation with County Counsel, to ensure compliance by Forensic Medical Group, and have established a deadline for compliance of December 31, 2014, at which time the penalties will be imposed.

F3. The Coroner's Office lacks adequate storage for the extensive records currently in cardboard boxes stacked throughout the facility.

The Board disagrees wholly with this finding. The records referred to in the report are associated with the back log of cases, and once this has been addressed, the records will be moved to storage. The current facility is adequate to meet the demands.

F4. Coroner operations can be negatively affected by delays resulting from failure to use up-to-date file management software tailored to its needs or hands-free recording equipment during autopsies.

The Board disagrees wholly with this finding. Delays are primarily caused by the shortage of Forensic Pathologists.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The Sheriff-Coroner's Office Impose contractually stipulated penalties for late autopsy reports while evaluating the suitability of its continued relationship with FMG (Forensic Medical Group) for forensic services.

Response: Recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

The Sonoma County Sheriff's Office is working with Forensic Medical group to reduce the backlog, and will institute penalties on January 1, 2015 for any reports that are delinquent at that

time. Sheriff's staff is also developing an Request for Proposal for forensic pathology services to solicit additional resources.

R2. The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors give priority to exploring possibilities for remodeling or relocating the existing Coroner's Office and Morgue.

Response: Recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

The Board has established a Facilities Ad Hoc Committee for the purpose of developing recommendations regarding short-and long-term uses of property on Chanate. The morgue, which is located on the Chanate property, will be part of this evaluation. In addition, the County General Services department is currently undertaking a Facilities Conditions Assessment, and the morgue is included in the facilities that will be assessed.

R3. The Coroner's Office and Morgue adopt technological improvements, including a modern file management system and hands-free recording devices in the autopsy room.

Response: Recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

Sheriff's Office staff is working with Information Systems Department to develop a module within the existing department records management system used by the Sheriff's Office. The Board of Supervisors will consider funding requests to support this work, if the Sheriff believes additional resources are necessary to support this work. As a contract provider, Forensic Medical Group would need to notify the County if there was equipment needed, such as hands-free recording devices, under the terms of the contract.