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Kermit B. Channell II
DIRECTOR

Arkansas State Crime Laboratory Board Meeting Minutes January 10, 2020

The following board members were present:

- Gary Smith
- Josh Farmer
- Dr. Ian Birkett
- Chief Richard Elliot
- Judge Brent Davis

The following board members called in to the board meeting:

- Sheriff Tim Helder

The following persons were present:

- Director Kermit Channell
- Assistant Director Cindy Moran
- Chief Forensic Toxicologist Kristen Mauldin
- Quality Assurance Manager Ryan Black
- Health and Safety Manager Alex McDonald

The meeting was called to order at 11:07am by Josh Farmer, and Kristen Mauldin took roll. Seven board members were present at the meeting and a quorum was made.

Current stipend and mileage were approved by the Board.

Approval of Minutes

Josh Farmer made a motion to approve the Board minutes from October 2019. Judge Davis seconded that motion and the minutes were approved.

Crime Lab Update

New Board Members

Kermit Channell welcomed new board members and stated he would like to hear from the board in regards to the best way to change up their meetings and what they would like to see. He stated the Lab always needed letters of support from board members to help future projects succeed.

Cindy Moran gave the following update on our mission and vision statement. The mission statement and vision statement are reviewed every year and updated as necessary. We want to make sure that our vision is measurable and employees know where we want to be. The Lab also has a strategic plan to see what those goals are with clear measurable objectives. We are working hard on an employee centered culture to retain analysts. We are providing education and Lean Six Sigma knowledge to the Department of Public Safety.

Department of Public Safety

Kermit Channell informed the Board that we had a new logo with DPS. The Governor restructured his cabinet to reduce the number down to 15 secretaries of departments with division underneath them. The organizational chart was presented. Lines on the right of the org chart show shared services such as HR, Legal, and Fiscal are all shared services between DPS agencies. There are growing pains because HR is an important aspect for our laboratory to have if employees want to seek out HR if help is needed.

Financial

Kermit Channell gave the following financial update: FY2020 operating budget was presented. We are on track to see general revenue reach \$12,000,000 with \$8,000,000 remaining. 1VM asset forfeitures are the only flexible spending funds that allow us to migrate funds to different areas as needed (e.g., rent, new equipment). Act 65 of 2005, the General Assembly delegated \$25 of any civil findings to be directed to the Crime Laboratory. That Act typically generates 1.7 million. We are expected to hit 1.6 million this year which is approximately the same as last fiscal year.

Caseload Status

Cindy Moran presented the caseload status:

- Physical Evidence: Doing good. Supervisor retired at the end of the year. Seeking a new supervisor. Down 1 analyst (promotion) will be advertising soon.
 - Sexual assaults: TAT 28 days
 - Homicides: TAT 36 days
 - Property: TAT 1 year
- Trace: Currently offers services in gunshot residue, ignitable liquids, hair suitability (DNA). All other services discontinued due to cost, proficiency testing. We can point law enforcement to other labs if that testing is needed. Staff is currently 3 analysts with cross training in Serology. In 2019 they worked more cases than they received.
 - Arson: TAT 30 days
 - GSR: 4 months
- DNA: continuing to struggle. 2019 worked more cases than they received thanks to proper staffing. Lost half of the section in 2015-2016. Currently have 3 analysts in training and 1 technician in training. Backlog is going up. Outsourced cases to be work (1200 property cases). Keeping up with sexual assault kits due to the 60 day turn-around-time requirement from Act 839. Have older sexual assault kits but prioritizing new kits due to Act 839. Homicides are 10 months behind. Cases are coming in consistently but trained staffing is not where we need it to be.
- CODIS: In 2016 you see convicted samples going down and arrestee going up. Working on not entering duplicated samples. Flag for officers to see samples have been taken. 10 day TAT, very efficient section. Conducting training for law enforcement. Moving lab space to 2nd floor to be adjacent to office space. Hoping to do first familial search cases. Working towards a test case. This could be an important tool in a cold case. Genotyping occurs at other labs but it is expensive. We want to try familial searching first. We will need to sign a MOU with law enforcement to make this happen. CODIS hits are consistent. Of 330 samples sent, 189 profiles were entered into the system with 140 hits.
- Latent Prints: Doing well. Waiting on cases to be completed from other sections before they can handle the case. Helping the Firearms section with a Latent Print technician. Shifting people around as needed. The trend for most labs in the nation is that cases received are going down.
- Firearms: Biggest concern for the lab besides the DNA section. Down staff and the training program takes 2 years to complete. Backlog going up and received cases going up as well.

NIBIN specialist retiring in March. Advertising for that position soon. TAT for homicide cases are 8 months but the oldest case is 32 months old. NIBIN TAT is 15 days. We share NIBIN station with LRPD. They have received a grant for their own station. We are currently managing time on the system with the lab and LRPD.

- Drugs Little Rock: cases coming in show a decrease because 1,200 were submitted to Lowell. Received over 22,000 cases between all three locations for 2019. Backlog going down due to being fully staffed. 9 month TAT in September 2018, down to a 4 month TAT currently. Working on quantitating THC in marijuana and hemp samples. Stop work program has helped to not work cases that are not needed. Over 1,200 cases have been stopped using court connect. There is a state statute that prosecutors should let us know but it hasn't been a great system. Sending out emails to remind prosecutors.
- Hope Drugs: holding steady. 2 analysts, 1 may come up to Little Rock one week a month to help with caseload. Backlog going down.
- Toxicology: TATs around 30 days. Includes DWI, coroner, and ME cases. Backlog drastically decreased in 2016 due to LSS. 1 analyst in training. New technical lead position to help with validations; freed up analyst position. Getting ready to implement confirmation of positives which is better results. This is the right thing to do and the timing is right.
- Medical Examiner's Office: Dr. Kokes stated that they were holding steady with cases as far as numbers are concerned. Down total numbers from last year. Becoming more aggressive with ME Consults to cut down cases. Homicides consistent but drug overdoses going down. Might not be getting all of the deaths coming in that occurred. NAME statistics-meeting 90% of cases completed in 90 days which is a requirement.

Cases are being received in Lowell. Approximately 1,200 drug cases and 153 toxicology cases from October 2019-December 2019. We are also transferring cases from Little Rock to Lowell for them to work due to court concerns.

Retention of analysts

Working on an employee centered culture over time.

Analysts lost in 2017: 15, retention rate 82%

Analysts lost in 2018: 9, retention rate 89.5%

Analysts lost in 2019: 3, retention rate 96%

Salary was discussed if this was an issue regarding analyst retention. The pay plan was instituted in 2016 and that helped move starting salary from \$37,000 up to \$45,000. Pay plan also hurt some analysts who had 9-10 years' experience. They were making the same as new analysts coming in the door and morale was a factor. Having a pay grid may help with retention and seniority. We have that foundation started with 'titles' to move people and improve for the future.

New Business

Lowell is up and running which is one of the most important things that has happened in a while. 36% of Drugs and Toxicology are from NWA so it takes a significant burden off the Little Rock Lab. Ribbon cutting for Lowell will take place January 24th at 2:00. Governor, Colonel, and Kermit will be speaking.

Phase II renovations

This is to help with efficiencies with the DNA section. Phase I was to help house Physical Evidence in one location; this will move DNA from 3 different areas within the lab to one, by their lab space. Bid opens January 31st, Awarded February 28th, work scheduled to start April 30th, and to be completed by July 31st.

Accreditation

Ryan Black spoke about the 3 upcoming assessments:

- Lowell site addition, January 14, 15th
- Site assessment in Little Rock March 16-17th. Will be focusing on Drugs and Digital Evidence
- NAME in the spring/summer. 5 year site assessment.

Medical Examiner concerns

1 vacancy, trying to hire for a new chief. 2 Medical Examiners are close to retirement so the need for the positions to be filled is critical. Facility downstairs is a downside to attracting potential ME's. Offering high end of salary range \$270,000 for a chief. Memphis is offering \$300,000 for a chief and cannot fill the position. Salary for an associate is \$199,000 which is below average.

Kermit will have discussions with Secretary Cook to help recruit potential candidates. Maybe offer tuition reimbursement to relieve that burden off medical students. Becoming close to going over autopsy's per doctor per year due to staffing. This could jeopardize accreditation and needs to be addressed by the board. It was asked if the morgue could be renovated. Kermit Channell explained that the building is 35-38 years old and a remodel was unlikely. There have been no new updates to the morgue other than storage areas or other improvements. There are 4 examination tables which is noisy and busy when all 4 are in use. In the summer it is humid, in the winter its cold due to HVAC issues. These are things which have to be addressed.

We need to examine the statutes and see if there is something we can change to help with cases coming in for autopsy- alter the current statutes and give authority to not do certain types of testing. It costs around \$1,700 for a case to come in just for an inspection due to clerical staff salary, investigators time, etc. It was asked if a suicide was on the list of cases that needed to be submitted. No, if the cause of death is unapparent, then cases should be sent in.

Josh Farmer motioned to adjourn, Judge Davis seconded that motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:08 p.m.