

## **MONTANA CORONERS' ASSOCIATION**

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

**August 6, 2020**

The Montana Coroners' Association Board of Directors meeting was called to order at 1:30 P.M. by President Bob Rosipal at the Fergus County Complex in Lewistown. Members present were President Bob Rosipal, Past President Greg Kirkwood, Vice President Wynn Meehan, Trenton Harbough, Sibley Jankoviak and Dan Whitted. Secretary-Treasurer Terry Bullis, Jessie Billquist-Jette and Steve Holton were present via a telephone conference call as was Scott Larson from the Crime Lab. Present as guests were Dr. Rob Kurtzman, Fergus County Undersheriff Tracy Lewellen and Cascade County Deputy Angel Creech.

### **MINUTES:**

Joan Farmer read the minutes of the last meeting of July 9, 2020. Dick made a motion the minutes be approved and this was seconded by Wynn and unanimously approved.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

The Treasurer's report was not given.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **2020 Annual Convention:**

There was a discussion as to whether we should hold the 2020 annual meeting as scheduled at the Billings Hotel and Convention Center (not the Hilton Garden Inn as indicated in the minutes of the July 9 meeting) on September 13-15, 2020. Dr. Kurtzman felt that if everyone was screened, wore masks and observed social distancing, it would be appropriate to continue holding the meeting as planned. Dick Brown made a motion to

have the meeting September 13-15, 2020. Sibly seconded the motion, which unanimously passed.

Dr. Kurtzman will check with the Health Department to confirm they will allow approximately 100 people to attend.

Jessie will contact the vender at Life Net who will sponsor a bar reception on Sunday. Northwest Tissue will host a meal at the convention. Steve will check with the hotel regarding these vendors.

Jessie reported arrangements need to be made to pick up the speaker, Darren Dake, at the airport and also return him to the airport after the convention. He will also need to have a room reserved for his stay.

There was a discussion on Trent becoming Vice President. Trent was not able to find anyone to take his board position in his district. Dr. Kurtzman will check with coroners in District 6, including Yellowstone County to see if anyone would be interested in becoming a board member. The Board still plans on Trent filling the Vice President position.

Dan brought two shirts with samples of the MCA logo submitted by Steve. The Board chose the polo shirt instead of the Tee shirt and the color selected was Oxford. All coroner offices will be notified on-line to have the size of all attending be submitted immediately as the deadline is August 30. There are both men and women sizes and the price ranges from \$14-\$17. This will be the MCA gift to the attendees.

Jessie said not to purchase a Yeti cooler until she checks with a local vender who may give us one at cost.

Bob reminded the Board to bring a gift to raffle from a local business, as this makes the raffle much more fun at the banquet.

Registration will be at 11:00 A.M. Sunday, September 13 and will end at 1:00 P.M. when the conference begins.

Our next Board meeting will be via zoom approximately a week before the convention to finalize all the details (ie. menus, any audiovisual requirements by speaker, location of vendors, location of Board meeting on Sunday, etc.). Bob will choose the date and time of this meeting.

We will also have a Board meeting on Sunday evening, September 13.

**Report from Dr. Kurtzman:**

The ME office has been approved to obtain a pickup with a bumper pull refrigerated trailer that could hold 20-25 bodies. They will be putting in the order soon. If there is a mass casualty in Montana the unit can be dispatched to the site and used for transport and/or storage. If COVID-19 deaths get high it would be available for use. The National Guard has 13 refrigerated storage containers (semi-trailer type) that can hold 15-20 bodies. Lewis & Clark Co. has a refrigerated reefer trailer. Some states have a Coroner Disaster Team who you can call and they respond quickly to the scene. If we are interested Dr. Kurtzman can help set one up for Montana.

Dr. Kurtzman and Scott reported there is grant money available for a death that is toxicology associated. If you order an autopsy and it is a toxicology-associated death, the grant may pay for the autopsy. Dr. Kurtzman strongly requests autopsies on suspected toxicology deaths. Even if there are drugs at the scene, sometimes the toxicology report is negative and you have an undetermined death. This particular grant ends in September or October.

ABMDI has a second grant that provides funds for two people a year to obtain training for free. Jessie is now certified as well as Cliff Mahoney from Yellowstone County and Andy LeBrun from Cascade County; another person from Lewis & Clark County is becoming certified.

Scott is working on a grant with the American Society of Clinical Pathology and National Attorney General Group along with Mason University. They are seeking a grant for death investigation and promotion. The grant would be a \$55,000-\$60,000 position for a year or maybe longer. This person would need expertise in Image Trend and would work with each coroner to

interface with the ME office in the same way. This person could train the coroner how to work with ImageTrend to facilitate the information the ME needs to collect. Dr. Kurtzman wants all the counties to do uniform death investigations and ImageTrend can help facilitate this. Dr. Kurtzman said possibly we could have a group work with the ME to help get people on board with ImageTrend. Wynn, Bob and Steve were part of the ground process. Dr. Kurtzman stated ImageTrend questions can be changed. Some can be mandatory. ImageTrend allows the user to modify the form and can add more to the report. Bob said some counties use Zuercher as their law enforcement software and it is supposed to interface with ImageTrend. Fergus County Undersheriff Tracy Lewellen reported they are the first to try in the state and are having difficulty interfacing with ImageTrend, but are working on it. More than 20 counties use the Zuercher system. This helps decrease their workload. Agencies in Missoula and Billings are interested in how effective the system will be when interfaced with ImageTrend.

Scott is doing a survey to find people who have a vested interest in the death investigation system. Positive attitudes and possible changes are needed. Bob and Scot VanDyken want to set up a meeting with Scott. If there is interest in a group, Scott would work with questions people might have.

Wynn asked if there are new death investigation books. Dr. Kurtzman said he has 56 books, one for each coroner. It is a quick review resource.

Dr. Orvik is moving to Tennessee to be closer to family. They have started advertising and have received a few applicants. Dr. Willy Kemp may be interested in returning.

Scott sent an e-mail to MSPOA and MCA about upgrades on bills in the legislature. He needs to know if the coroners have anything on the laws they want changed and if there are any bills that need cleaning up. Wynn brought up the inquest issue. MACO is pushing to combine coroners with the sheriff's departments to save money. Fergus County and Lewis & Clark

County were both changed to sheriff/coroner positions. The county government votes it in.

Inquests now need to be done by a non-law enforcement coroner and what few civilian coroners that are left are being used to the max. There are two different county attorney opinions now concerning this issue..

Dr. Kurtzman stated other states have the ME and coroner separate. Here they are combined. Dick said they should bring in DCI to investigate. Wynn feels the laws need to be cleaned up. Bob, Scott, Dick and Wynn met with the AG and were told coroners can't charge for inquests.

### **COVID-19 Testing:**

Dr. Kurtzman reported the Health Department is responsible for COVID-19 swabs if collected by the coroner. The nasal swabs show the most activity of the virus. PCR is the best test. The serology test shows the body reacts to an immune response. If you contact it shortly before the blood being drawn it may not show.

Mileage was taken (Greg 270, Trent 612, Dan 400, Sibly 496, Bob 218, and Joan 218).

Wynn made a motion the meeting be adjourned. Greg seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Farmer

Recording Secretary