

**Minutes of the District 22 Medical Examiner Search Committee**  
**4 p.m., July 27, 2022 – Meeting Room next to the State Attorney’s Office**  
**Charlotte County Justice Center, 350 East Marion Avenue, Punta Gorda, Florida**

**Members Present**

State Attorney Amira Fox, 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit  
Dr. Barbara Wolf, Medical Examiner, Districts 5 & 24 (via Zoom)  
The Honorable Kathy Smith, Public Defender, 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit  
Sheriff Bill Prummell, Charlotte County Sheriff (via Zoom)  
Chief Pam Davis, Punta Gorda Police Department  
Commissioner Chris Constance, Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners  
The Honorable Ken Roberson, Roberson Funeral Homes  
Dr. Joseph Ravid, Gulfview Medical Institute

**Others Present**

Janette Knowlton, Charlotte County Attorney  
Gordon Burger, Charlotte County Budget Director  
Chief Assistant State Attorney Richard Montecalvo  
Assistant State Attorney Shannon Doolity, Charlotte County Office Head  
Samantha Syoen, State Attorney’s Office Communications Director  
Chief Investigator J Purdy, State Attorney’s Office  
Investigator Phil Marotta, State Attorney’s Office  
Leandro Navarro, State Attorney’s Office I.T. Specialist  
Cameron Goff, State Attorney’s Office I.T. Specialist

**Meeting Commenced at 4 p.m.**

The third meeting of the District 22 Medical Examiner Search Committee was called to order by State Attorney Amira Fox, 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit. A roll call was done by members of the committee at the request of State Attorney Fox. Committee member, Dr. Barbara Wolf, Medical Examiner, Districts 5 & 24, appeared via Zoom, as did Charlotte County Sheriff Bill Prummell. There was an in-person quorum.

Janette Knowlton, the Charlotte County Attorney and Gordon Burger, the Charlotte County Budget Director, were also introduced and in attendance.

State Attorney Fox passed out the minutes from the July 5, 2022, meeting for the committee to review.

State Attorney Fox began the meeting by recapping the work completed since the last meeting. State Attorney Fox explained she had reached out to Dr. Russell S. Vega, Chief Medical Examiner District Twelve of Florida, to ask, as the committee had wanted, if Dr. Vega could accommodate a full-time person in the Charlotte County Medical Examiner’s Office. Dr. Vega said he could do 50% of his time in Charlotte and 50% with two others rotating through the office.

Following the review of the minutes, Commissioner Constance made a motion to approve the minutes. Punta Gorda Police Chief Pam Davis seconded the motion. The minutes received unanimous approval by the committee. (The minutes are linked on the website above this document.)

Commissioner Constance asked Mr. Burger for his analysis of the budget estimate worksheet that Dr. Vega provided to the committee at the previous meeting. Mr. Burger said the biggest increase, as compared to the current proposed budget, are changes to the retirement system and retirement benefits. Mr. Burger also said there is a first-year database subscription but after that there is just the cost of monitoring fees. He also said that Dr. Imami, the current District 22 Medical Examiner, is an independent contractor. The committee would like to find out whether Dr. Vega's employees are county employees.

The Honorable Ken Roberson clarified that Dr. Imami's employees are not part of the Florida Retirement System.

Dr. Wolf drafted an advertisement for a Medical Examiner that was circulated at the start of the meeting for review. (The ad draft is linked on the website below this document.) Dr. Wolf said the ad was drafted under Dr. Imami's model as an independent contractor with the Medical Examiner paying everything under a private organization. The salary range was left blank.

Janette Knowlton questioned if the population was correct on the ad as it said it was over 200,000 and she believes it is likely 196,000. Dr. Wolf said she retrieved the number from the Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Knowlton said she would double check the number.

Ms. Knowlton said the Charlotte County Board of Commissioners just approved the budget at \$742,800. The salary approved by the board is at \$310,000.

The committee then discussed what salary or salary range to put in the advertisement. Commissioner Constance suggested it read "Starting salary with range from \$250,000." He said that could be the base and could then go up based on experience. Sheriff Prummell asked if \$250,000 is low for Florida. Dr. Wolf said it is.

State Attorney Fox asked the committee if they want to offer a higher salary in the ad since Dr. Imami is being paid \$310,000.

Janette Knowlton said the board is the one who sets the salary. State Attorney Fox asked the committee if they want to put the existing salary in the ad or would that imply that is what we pay? Dr. Wolf said it would. Dr. Ravid suggested less verbiage in the ad.

Dr. Wolf referenced salaries in Texas, and said they are much higher for these positions with a starting salary of roughly \$500,000. Some jobs are even including tuition and loan forgiveness and a signing bonus. She added that Charlotte is operating on a fixed budget at least for this year.

Dr. Ravid said there should be a number that is palatable, minimum \$300,000.

The committee agreed the posting would state the current salary and that salary would be determined based on qualifications and experience.

Sheriff Prummell said the salary needs to be competitive. He said the salary depends on experience and we want to be competitive, but we don't want to advertise something we can't afford.

State Attorney Fox said the committee would verify the population of Charlotte County prior to posting the ad. Commissioner Constance asked if the person hired would be required to live in Charlotte County. He said if it is not an immediate requirement he would like them to live in Charlotte within 12 months of being hired. State Attorney Fox asked the board if they want to make that a requirement.

Sheriff Prummell said it would be preferable to live in the county, but they need to be within one hour of response time. Chief Davis agreed. State Attorney Fox asked the board if they want it in the ad or should it be saved for the interview. Dr. Wolf said leave it for the interview and said they do need to be close enough to respond to scenes.

Commissioner Constance asked if it should be about time or distance. There was a general agreement by the committee it should be about response time.

State Attorney Fox asked Ms. Knowlton if she could help with the actual advertising. She said yes and she will work with the Human Resources Department of Charlotte County.

Dr. Wolf said the committee should utilize the Florida Academy of Medical Examiners, the National Academy of Medical Examiners and the American Academy of Forensic Sciences to advertise. Dr. Wolf said she will help Ms. Knowlton with connections to the groups referenced above. State Attorney Fox asked the committee if they wanted the ad sent out as soon as possible. State Attorney Fox said she would be the contact person.

State Attorney Fox said the committee would need to form an interview committee and will need to have an interview date for the interview committee.

Commissioner Constance asked Dr. Wolf if the committee will advertise on websites or to the three societies mentioned earlier. Dr. Wolf said it would be to the three societies. Commissioner Constance asked if the committee could make a small ad for journals, like in the back of publications. Dr. Wolf said there are two journals published by the societies and she will look into that.

State Attorney Fox asked the committee if they want to advertise for 60 days and see how many responses they get. State Attorney Fox asked the committee about the deadline of September 30. She said she would then email them the resumes. The committee agreed to 60 days. Commissioner Constance said let's see what comes in and we can delay the meeting if we do not get enough responses.

There was discussion about having the ad read the position would be open "until filled." Dr. Wolf said that Dr. Vega said he will provide coverage as long as necessary. The committee agreed the ad could read "until filled."

State Attorney Fox told the committee there was a candidate who had reached out to Samantha Syoen, Communications Director for the State Attorney's Office. State Attorney Fox asked the board if the documents provided by Dr. Daniel Schultz should be considered an application.

Dr. Wolfe said that Dr. Schultz used Dr. Vega as a reference and that Dr. Thogmartin should be contacted as a former employer.

Sheriff Prummell asked Ms. Knowlton about the Sunshine law and sending the applications for review to the group. She said material can be sent to the group as long as there is no comment. State Attorney Fox reminded the group of their Sunshine law obligations.

The Honorable Ken Roberson said the committee should assign someone to do the vetting. State Attorney Fox agreed.

All board members agreed to be on the interview committee.

Dr. Wolf said it is normal to pay the expenses and travel for those interviewing.

The committee discussed options and Ms. Knowlton said all applicants need to be treated the same way. She suggested using Zoom meetings then bring down candidates the committee wants to meet in person.

Commissioner Constance asked if we need to ask everyone the same set of questions. Ms. Knowlton said yes, the same basic set. The committee agreed to bring suggested questions to the next meeting.

The committee then discussed the application. Sheriff Prummell asked if the committee was going to have a standard application. There was also discussion on where the applications would be sent. State Attorney Fox said there could be custom email to the State Attorney's Office. Dr. Wolf said she will send a sample application and State Attorney Fox said the committee could use that.

Ms. Knowlton will put a link in the ad to submit the application with a cover letter, resume and references. State Attorney Fox will then distribute via email. She reminded everyone not to respond back to the emails.

Sheriff Prummell asked if the committee would be giving applicants a copy of the budget and see what they would do differently. Dr. Wolf said yes, after the initial interview. Chief Davis also agreed. State Attorney Fox also suggested getting a 5-year plan from each applicant at any second interview. Sheriff Prummell asked if the committee would all have the same outline for vetting.

State Attorney Fox said State Attorney's Office Investigators will do the preliminary employment background checks. The person assigned to vetting will call references. State Attorney Fox said the advertisement for the position should say to add references with their submissions. She said the person assigned to vetting will call the previous places they worked.

The Honorable Ken Roberson asked the committee how they will treat Dr. Vega since the committee already spoke to him. He asked if he will need to do an application and submit a resume. State Attorney Fox will tell Dr. Vega the committee advertised the position and that the committee agreed he is still in the running and that he needs to fill out an application.

State Attorney Fox will get the ad to Dr. Vega so he can follow the process.

State Attorney Fox suggested rotating people to handle vetting. Dr. Ravid will vet Dr. Schultz.

Commissioner Constance asked State Attorney Fox if she will immediately assign applications when they are received. State Attorney Fox said yes. They will be sent to the committee and assigned to a person to vet. She asked committee members to respond to applications sent to them with simply "received."

Chief Davis asked if committee members should bring questions to the next meeting. State Attorney Fox said yes, that everyone should bring questions. She suggested the county could have preliminary budget questions too.

The committee agreed that if the candidate being vetted is not someone they would hire, they would not need to be brought in for a formal interview.

The committee set the next meeting date for October 18<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m. at the same location.

Chief Davis made a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Dr. Ravid seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.