

Minutes of the District 22 Medical Examiner Search Committee
4 p.m., February 27, 2023 – 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, 20th Judicial Circuit
Charlotte County Sheriff Bill Prummell
Chief Pam Davis, Punta Gorda Police Department
The Honorable Kathy Smith, Public Defender, 20th Judicial Circuit
The Honorable Ken Roberson, Roberson Funeral Homes
Dr. Joseph Ravid, Gulfview Medical Institute

Others Present

Richard Montecalvo, Chief Assistant State Attorney, 20th Judicial Circuit
Chief Deputy Michael Casarella, Charlotte County Sheriff's Office
Janette Knowlton, Charlotte County Attorney
Samantha Syoen, State Attorney's Office Communications Director
Assistant State Attorney Shannon Doolity, Charlotte County Office Head
Investigator Phillip Marotta, State Attorney's Office

Meeting Commenced at 4 p.m.

The meeting of the District 22 Medical Examiner Search Committee was called to order by State Attorney Amira Fox, 20th Judicial Circuit at 4 p.m. There was an in-person quorum. The committee members noted above were present, as were the others noted in attendance. No member of the general public attended.

State Attorney Fox started the meeting by informing the committee that the candidate selected unanimously by the committee to be recommended to the Governor, Dr. Wayne Kurz, declined the position after a break down in contract negotiations regarding the surplus funds provision.

State Attorney Fox said it would be up to the committee to decide what to do next.

State Attorney Fox told the committee that she had spoken with Dr. Jon Thogmartin and he explained what is happening in Florida with Medical Examiners. He detailed movement among Medical Examiners into different positions around the state. Dr. Thogmartin also explained the different types of contracts utilized and the surplus funds issue.

Attorney Knowlton said she reviewed another contract from Dr. Wolf (Committee Member and Medical Examiner, Districts 5 & 24) that gives the money back to her at the end of the year. Attorney Knowlton said it is not something the county would recommend.

State Attorney Fox said she called Dr. Russell Vega, Chief Medical Examiner District Twelve of Florida, after Dr. Kurz withdrew and asked him if he would remain as the interim Medical Examiner for Charlotte County and he agreed. They discussed his current contract which is the same as the current proposed contract for the position. He is comfortable with the contract that returns any potential surplus funds back to the county at the end of the year.

The Honorable Ken Roberson made a motion to recommend Dr. Vega for the position of District 22 Medical Examiner.

State Attorney Fox then seconded the motion to recommend Dr. Vega.

It was discussed that Dr. Vega had agreed in his interviews to assign a full-time Associate Medical Examiner to Charlotte County and that this vote was contingent on that promise.

Punta Gorda Police Chief Pam Davis asked if it can be put in the contract that the Medical Examiner's Office must be assigned a full-time Associate Medical Examiner? Attorney Knowlton said yes, it can be written in the contract.

State Attorney Fox said since he is already the interim Medical Examiner, if selected, she would write a letter to Dr. Wolf, who is also now the Chair for the Medical Examiner's Commission, and they would decide whether to recommend him to the Governor.

Voice vote – motion carries.

State Attorney Fox said she would call Dr. Vega and inform him of their recommendation. Chief Davis asked State Attorney Fox to ask him to provide a full-time associate. State Attorney Fox said she would make clear that the recommendation to the position would be contingent on Dr. Vega providing a full-time associate.

There was a brief discussion by the committee about the length of the term of the contract. Attorney Knowlton said she had reviewed Dr. Imami's contract and it references a four year term.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.