

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION

**DATE:** June 28, 2016

**TO:** Supervisor Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Brian L. Peterson, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner, Medical Examiner's Office  
Christine Westrich, Director, Office of Emergency Management

**SUBJECT:** Informational Report Related to a Collaborative Development between the Medical Examiner's Office, the Office of Emergency Management, and the Medical College of Wisconsin and a potential response to an RFP for the construction of the Department of Justice's Crime Laboratory.

**REQUEST**

There is no request at this time; this report is for informational purposes only.

**BACKGROUND**

In February 2015, an informational report related to the Consolidated Facilities Plan (File No. 15-162) noted that the County had responded to a Request for Information (RFI) issued by the State regarding the potential relocation of Department of Justice (DOJ) facilities. In that response, the County proposed a potential partnership between the DOJ Crime Lab and the County's Medical Examiner (ME) office. Since the time of response, the County has held discussions with numerous other organizations with similar and complementary missions and found further interest in participating in such a collaboration. The Milwaukee County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) have been the most involved participants in these discussions.

**SUMMARY**

A new collaborative facility is now taking shape and is being referred to as the Forensic Science and Intelligence Center. This facility would house regionally-based public and private entities, a southeastern Wisconsin-based coalition, focused on improving the health and safety of our communities.

By locating State and County departments with similar needs and objectives in one space, mutual goals can be realized to include efficiency and transparency during collaborative investigations as well as shared common spaces, resources, and costs. The inclusion of MCW and other potential academic partners is a multiplier, cultivating future research and education programs, to include forensic pathology, biotechnology, and emergency health services. This coalition of regional organizations in a state-of-the-art facility, builds on our region's research and community's self-reliance toward coordinated resiliency.

**PARTNERS**

As mentioned above, the partners currently being discussed for inclusion in this opportunity are as follows:

- Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office: The County Medical Examiner's Office is charged with investigating and determining the cause, circumstances and manner in each case of sudden, unexpected or unusual death, as well as performing other functions important to public health and safety. The current ME facility has deteriorated beyond its useful life and will need to be relocated to a new facility soon due to space limitations and the failure of current facilities to meet industry standards. The unique needs of this office include particular security and biohazard safety requirements, and a shared facility with the Crime Lab (with its similar needs) and OEM would benefit all parties by sharing the expense of building operations. Additionally, the ability for the DOJ Crime Lab and the ME Office to work in tandem during a criminal investigation will enhance the entire case consultation process. Co-location with MCW would benefit both entities by allowing for more collaborative education and research opportunities between the two. OEM adjacencies are noted in the next paragraph.
- Milwaukee County Office of Emergency Management (OEM): The Office of Emergency Management is in the business of urban resiliency, the protection of lives and property through exacting communications to decision-makers and through the total coordination of resources, on-location and on-time. OEM strives for a 'whole community' approach, meaning collaborative stewardship in government and in private entities, thereby allowing civic society to bounce back from the shocks of our increasingly complex culture. Excellence in first responder services is achieved on a daily basis with oversight of the County's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system and operation of the entire public safety radio network. These two services, coupled with intelligent data analysis from the OEM Communications Center, servicing law enforcement, paramedics and hospitals, allows the department to better predict and target responses and preparedness efforts. The OEM is currently populating multiple office locations, a jumble of available space that does not address service needs, with the Communications Center environment reaching its end of service. A central location mingled with like partners is right for leadership of the department and would allow immediate intelligent data-sharing for accurate decision-making by all government leaders, not to mention immense training opportunities. Joint positioning with the Medical Examiner allows for efficient response to public health crises, mass casualty and fatality events, all the while, sharing first-hand field operations to better improve community preparedness in our physical, social and economically challenging century.
- State of Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Crime Lab: The Wisconsin State Crime Lab Bureau's primary mission is to provide quality forensic analyses in the interest of criminal justice. The DOJ's RFI seeking a new site/building for the Crime Lab in late 2014 is what initially sparked this idea for a collaborative facility. Their requirements (per the 2014 RFI) are similar to those of the Medical Examiner, and OEM, including similar security concerns related to building/facility restricted access. This co-location would facilitate the transfer of evidence and data between the Crime Lab and the Medical Examiner, offering additional opportunities for close collaboration and forensic examination. A multi-partnered building that serves as a true forensic science center would not only be a tremendous asset to southeastern Wisconsin, but to the entire state and the Midwest region.
- Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW): The Medical College of Wisconsin serves as a national leader in the education and development of the next generation of physicians

and scientists, and works to discover and translate new knowledge in the biomedical sciences, to provide cutting-edge, interdisciplinary and compassionate clinical care of the highest quality, and to improve the health of the communities they serve. The Medical College sees this collaboration as an opportunity to work with the DOJ and the Medical Examiner, the OEM, and other potential educational programs, to enhance education opportunities for their existing forensic and biotechnology programs, and to create leading and innovative academic programs, benefitting the next-generation of students and today's faculty, while sustaining the coalition. A pipeline of fresh undergraduates would help critical personnel shortages in the forensic pathology and biotechnology fields.

### **NATIONAL TREND – BEST PRACTICES**

The idea of combining such similar services to enhance intergovernmental cooperation is not new. Similar type of collaborative facilities and programs have been seeing tremendous success throughout the country, including:

- Kansas Bureau of Investigation Forensic Science Center at Washburn University
- West Tennessee Regional Forensic Center
- Maryland Forensic Medical Center
- University of New Mexico with Office of the Medical Investigator
- California Forensic Science Institute
- Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner in Cleveland, OH
- Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences in Houston, TX
- Dallas County Medical Examiner and Crime Lab
- Roanoke County Virginia's Department of Forensic Science

While these and other facilities have seen benefits from co-location and coordination of their forensic and similar services and programs, the proposed collaborative Center we could create is truly unique in terms of the number of participants and resources they provide and the potential benefits the area, the state, and the entire region.

### **THE BUILDING**

The single asset, known as, the Forensic Science and Intelligence Center would serve as:

- a multi-organizational academic center of excellence that develops cutting-edge, nationally competitive science research, achieving international recognition for advanced degrees in emergency health services and forensic sciences;
- an accelerator that is a magnet for top forensic and investigative talent, advancing research and best practices for law enforcement and criminal justice; and
- an intelligent hub for evidence-based data and open communication lines to facilitate the quick, efficient and accurate solving of investigations.

With this Center, there is an opportunity to become an economic engine for the region and a national model -- a destination for collaboration with a world-class conference center.


A single building, housing the Department of Justice, the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner, the Milwaukee County OEM, and the Medical College of Wisconsin would bring untold opportunities to our communities. The synergistic advantages among public and private agencies are clear, yet the fostering of community growth is just being realized. A Forensic Science and Intelligence Center will raise involvement from community-based organizations as innovative education and policies are borne of collaborative data, and most importantly, enthusiastic minds. A stronger civic society will reduce the chronic challenges of unemployment and accompanying housing and transportation inequalities. This is a rare occurrence of matching needs and an unprecedented regional opportunity for exceptional growth and an improved, sustainable culture of public safety.

## FINANCE

The proposed financial implications of this facility on Milwaukee County are largely uncertain at this time. Should the County respond to an RFP issued by the State with regard to the DOJ Crime Lab, further reports and requests will be provided to the County Board of Supervisors. MCW has contracted with The Concord Group to provide a capital budget by September 2016.

## RECOMMENDATION

There is no recommendation at this time; this report is for informational purposes only.

  
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Brian L. Peterson, M.D.  
Chief Medical Examiner, MCMEO

  
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Christine Westrich  
Director, OEM

Attachment: Forensic Science and Intelligence Center Summary 6.27.2016

cc: Chris Abele, County Executive  
Teig Whaley-Smith, Director, Department of Administrative Services  
Raisa Koltun, Chief of Staff, Office of the County Executive  
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, County Board of Supervisors  
Steve Cady, Research & Policy Director  
*County Board Standing Committee of reference by the Chairman:*  
*Respective Standing Committee Supervisors*  
*County Clerk, Committee Coordinator*  
*Office of the Comptroller, Research Analyst*