



## Agenda Item Summary

---

**File #: 24-00144**

**Agenda Date: 3/12/2024**

---

**Agenda Item Name:**

**Update Services for Office of the Medical Examiner**

**Presenter:**

Tommy Crosby, Assistant County Manager Budget & Fiscal Services  
Carl Smart, Deputy County Manager  
Claudia Tuck Community Support Services Director

**Description:**

Medical Examiner Coyne has notified University of Florida of his pending resignation date of April 11, 2024. The State Attorney will appoint an interim Medical Examiner and Alachua County will be the designated host agency.

**Recommended Action:**

- Authorize the County Manager or designee to negotiate a contract with District 6 Chief Medical Examiner Jon R. Thogmartin, M.D., to provide services to District 8 on interim basis; and
- Authorize the Chair to send notice of terminating the Three-Party Agreement for Medical Examiner Services between Alachua County, Thomas Coyne, M.D., Ph.D. and the University of Florida, with a termination date of 30 days thereafter; and
- Authorize the Chair to execute Interlocal Agreement for Medical Examiner Services with Baker, Bradford, Levy, Gilchrist, Union, and Dixie Counties, in form generally as presented; and
- Approve staff to transition equipment and supplies from UF to support the District 8 Medical Examiner's Office.

**Prior Board Motions:**

12/12/23 Commissioner Cornell moved the following:

1. Approve the creation of a new department of the Medical Examiner under the Alachua County BoCC
2. Direct staff to negotiate contract with Medical Examiner (M.E) at a competitive rate and bring back to the Board for approval.
3. Direct staff to conduct a compensation study for necessary positions and develop a budget for the new department.

2nd Commissioner Chestnut

The motion carried 5-0.

**Fiscal Note:**

Alachua County is responsible for a portion of the cost of the operation of the Medical Examiner's Office based on the percentage of deaths for the prior fiscal year. The proposed interim Medical

Examiner has requested to contract with Alachua County as the host agency and Alachua County will enter interlocal agreement with the other counties served by District 8. Currently, Alachua County is responsible for approximately 63.5% of the total expenses.

**Strategic Guide:**

Public Safety

**Background:**

Chapter 406, Florida Statutes, the "Medical Examiners Act," authorizes the creation of medical examiner districts throughout the state. District Medical Examiners are appointed by the Governor for a three-year term of office. Medical Examiners and Associate Medical Examiners are entitled to compensation and such reasonable salary and fees as are established by the board of county commissioners in the respective districts. Alachua County is part of Florida Medical Examiner District 8. In addition to Alachua County, the other counties in the Florida Medical Examiner District 8 are Baker, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy and Union counties and the District additionally covers Dixie County.

Alachua County is a party to a Three-Party Agreement with the University of Florida Board of Trustees (UF) and Thomas M. Coyne, M.D., Ph.D. for Medical Examiner Services. This Agreement delineates the responsibilities of each of the three parties in relation to the performance of mandated autopsy services. The other counties in or covered by District 8 and the State of Florida, Department of Corrections have similar agreements for these medical examiner services.

Currently, the Medical Examiner and the University of Florida College of Medicine submit a budget annually to Alachua County, each county in or covered by District 8, and the State Department of Corrections for Administrative costs that include salaries and benefits, transportation, and facility costs. The costs associated with autopsies are separate, rate based and require reimbursement. These charges are included as part of the agreements. Each county and the State are billed based on a percentage of utilization from the prior fiscal year.

An interest in moving the Medical Examiner Office to be a part of Alachua County was raised. The Medical Examiner is authorized to determine where the Office is located. Prior to moving under the auspices of UF, the Medical Examiner Office operated under Alachua General Hospital. Now, Alachua County owns the building out of which the Office operates.

Dr. Coyne has since offered his resignation as the District 8 Medical Examiner effective April 11, 2024. Per Statute, the State Attorney will appoint an interim Medical Examiner. The State Attorney for the Eighth Judicial Circuit has worked in conjunction with Alachua County to identify an interim Medical Examiner.

If this agenda item is approved, Alachua County would provide notice of termination of the Three-Party Agreement with Dr. Coyne and UF. The proposal is an Interlocal Agreement whereby the counties in or covered by District 8 would agree to joint use of the District 8 Medical Examiner's Office and the sharing of expenses, and would agree for Alachua County to be lead Administrator. A contract would then be negotiated with the interim Medical Examiner appointed by the State Attorney. The Medical Examiner appointed would serve each county in and covered by District 8 and would provide medical examiner services to the State Department of Corrections.