

WOODBURY COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AGENDA ITEM(S) REQUEST FORM

Date: 1/18/2024 Weekly Agenda Date: 1/23/2024

ELECTED OFFICIAL / DEPARTMENT HEAD / CITIZEN: Mark Bethel, Iowa State Medical Examiner's Office

WORDING FOR AGENDA ITEM:

Discussion regarding medical examiner service for Woodbury County

ACTION REQUIRED:

Approve Ordinance

Approve Resolution

Approve Motion

Public Hearing

Other: Informational

Attachments

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Iowa State Medical Examiner's Office will discuss the situation with the Woodbury County Board with the goal to avoid resignation. Medical investigators and program changes will be addressed.

BACKGROUND:

On December 14, 2023, Dr. Julie Breiner signed a resignation letter effective March 31, 2024, on behalf of herself as Woodbury County Medical Examiner, and Pathology Medical Services of Siouxland as Deputy Medical Examiners.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

unknown

IF THERE IS A CONTRACT INVOLVED IN THE AGENDA ITEM, HAS THE CONTRACT BEEN SUBMITTED AT LEAST ONE WEEK PRIOR AND ANSWERED WITH A REVIEW BY THE COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE?

Yes No

RECOMMENDATION:

n/a

ACTION REQUIRED / PROPOSED MOTION:

n/a



Pathology Medical Services of Siouxland, P.C.
2720 Stone Park Blvd., Sioux City, Iowa 51104-3734
Phone: (712) 279-3226 Fax (712) 279-7034

J.T. Quesenberry, MD, FCAP, Lab Director
J.A. Breiner, MD, FCAP
B.W. Noll, MD, FCAP
B.W. Steussy, MD, FCAP

December 14, 2023

Mr. Matthew Ung
Chair, Woodbury County Board of Supervisors

Dear Mr. Ung,

Please accept this letter of resignation for myself as Woodbury County Medical Examiner, and the other pathologists of Pathology Medical Services of Siouxland (PMS), as Deputy Medical Examiners.

The increasing complexity and time commitment required to perform death investigative services for the county is no longer sustainable for our medical practice. Recently, one of the pathologists within our group relocated to Des Moines, leaving three pathologists to run a full-time anatomic and clinical pathology practice at UnityPoint Health – St. Luke’s in addition to providing pathology services for six critical access hospitals and two outpatient surgical centers in the region. We are no longer able to provide services as the Woodbury County Medical Examiners under the current circumstances.

PMS has provided medical examiner services to the county for 40 years and St. Luke’s hospital has supported us by providing significant infrastructural services such as: 24/7 paging services; security guards to maintain chain of custody in the morgue; secretarial assistance in our office to prepare and distribute reports and respond to requests for medical examiner reports and toxicology results from law enforcement, families and lawyers; nursing and chaplain services on occasions when assistance is needed to help families that come to the hospital requesting to view their loved one; and provision and maintenance of the morgue and autopsy suite.

I believe Woodbury County needs to adopt a different model of death investigation and pattern itself after some of the other larger counties by using medical examiner investigators and an office “coordinator.” Two individuals from Sioux City have already gone through medical examiner investigator training, but several more are needed. The Iowa Office of the State Medical Examiner will be a good point of contact in helping the county develop and implement a better model of death investigation and reporting.

Thank you for giving Pathology Medical Services of Siouxland the opportunity to assist the citizens of Woodbury County for the past 40 years. Our last day for providing coverage will be March 31, 2024. My direct phone number is 279-3167 if you would like to discuss this.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Julie A. Breiner'.

Julie Breiner, MD