

Proposal for Medical Examiner Position Pierce County



Office of the Coroner Pierce County, Wisconsin

Susan Dzuba 424 Birch Street River Falls Wisconsin 54022-2613



Office of the Coroner Pierce County, Wisconsin

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To: Finance and Personnel Committee
Re: Medical Examiner System Proposal-- Clarification
From: Sue Dzubay
Date: June 23, 2005

I have been asked to clarify the reason I wish to be on the agenda for your committee. The law enforcement committee gave a favorable recommendation to the concept of medical examiner versus coroner. They asked me to meet with you and present the proposal in order to continue developing this system or abandon the process. The packets of information in your mailboxes this past April introduced the concept and presented basic data of counties of similar size and the process they used for the medical examiner position.

Statutorily, the full County Board can vote to make the change to medical examiner as long as it is prior to the filing date of the next election cycle, June 2006. As part of my presentation to you at the July 8th meeting, I will share the proposed timeline.

Consider the work of the coroner and medical examiner positions to the one in the same; one is elected (coroner) and the other is appointed by the county board---or Personnel and Finance Committee. The medical examiner position would **not** be a physician who would do autopsies, but someone that met the requirements of the position description and continue to serve in Pierce County. This position would follow the budget guidelines, continue reporting to the law enforcement committee and adhere to the same guidelines set forth for the coroner position.

I propose this change because I feel strongly that the individual in this position meet a basic set of qualifications and skills to perform this job. As coroner, the regulations and requirements have increased substantially, to the point where it could be considered a liability to the county if an unqualified individual were to be coroner. As an appointed position, the County Board could have greater control in the appointment process.

My goal is to educate your committee about this system and, if given the nod to continue, I would compile a **draft** proposal of the position, in its entirety, with the help of the law enforcement committee and return to your committee for review and consideration sometime in the future.

I am available for questions, 715-425-0410. I look forward to meeting with you July 8th.



Office of the Coroner Pierce County, Wisconsin

Susan Dzubay 424 Birch Street River Falls Wisconsin 54022-2613

March 7, 2005

Dear Law Enforcement Committee Members,

I introduced the concept of medical examiner system for Pierce County last fall. I feel strongly that the individual in this position meet a basic set of qualifications to serve Pierce County. In the past 4 years, the requirements of death investigation have expanded to include a detailed set of actions/guidelines for determining cause and manner of death. These requirements, if not met or understood, in my opinion, could create a liability for our county. The way to minimize this potential liability is to change to a medical examiner position for our county.

The basic role of the positions differ in that the Medical Examiner position is appointed by the county board, whereas the coroner position is filled by whomever is elected, regardless of qualifications. The role of both is outlined by state statutes and the medical examiner role, as a county appointed position, must follow the guidelines of the county, including qualifications, expectations of the position as determined by county personal department. The term of service is determined by the county board whereas the coroner is elected every 2 years.

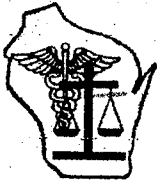
It is the qualification aspect which has prompted me to discuss this further with the law enforcement committee. Your understanding of this position and support for the best interests of the county is vital to the progress of this idea. I have gathered some statistics of counties similar in size to Pierce, as well as our neighboring counties which currently have the Medical Examiner system. The cost estimates I have enclosed reflect the current budget and 5 year plan/goals. My goal is to secure a recommendation from law enforcement committee, for consideration by the Finance and Personal committees this summer. Once the concept is accepted by Finance and Personnel, additional discussion with the law enforcement committee will address the following topics:

1. Position descriptions- *completed in 2004 for coroner and deputy*
2. Appointment process
3. Salary and benefits
4. Term of appointment

I would like you to review this information in preparation for the April law enforcement meeting at which I would like to discuss this concept. I realize this is a new avenue for our county, and one in which you may want more information. If you have specific questions you'd like answered, please contact me as I will come prepared to answer them at the April meeting. I can be reached at home: 715-425-0410 or paged through Dispatch at 715-273-5051. I look forward to the discussion at the April meeting.

Sincerely,

Sue Dzubay



Office of the Coroner Pierce County, Wisconsin

Susan Dzubay 424 Birch Street River Falls Wisconsin 54022-2613

To: Law Enforcement Committee
Re: Medical Examiner System- Comparison


In the state of Wisconsin there are 72 counties, of these, 22 have the Medical Examiner System. Of the 22 Medical Examiners, only 3 are MDs and that is counting Milwaukee and Fond du Lac who share Dr. Jentzen. The 3rd is Dr. Biedrzycki in Waukesha. The other 19 along with the 50 coroners are all non-physicians.

County (ME est.)	Population	Annual # calls	Salary	Benefits
Door (1992)	28,402	102	Contracts with Brown County	Yes, full time
Oneida(1991)	37,187	108	\$ 5964	No
Dunn (1992)	41,114	130	\$ 47,000	Yes-also EM Dir
Monroe(1993)	41,796	378	Per Diem	No
Calumet	43,383	90	\$ 3600	No, part time
Douglas (1991)	44,093	154	\$15,808	No, part time
St. Croix(1991)	71,155	249	\$9660	No, part-time

There are a few counties which have contracts with neighboring counties to provide the service to both counties; this was a result of location and lack of interest in the position. I have spoken with many of the personal departments of the above counties and they opted for the change to ME based on the County Board desiring continuity within the position as well as a description of duties outlining the basic qualifications for the job. Many Counties had felt at risk based upon the elected coroner system and unqualified individuals in the position. Some counties combined their Emergency Management Department and the Medical Examiner Position, creating one full-time position.

In Pierce County, the coroner contracts for transport, autopsy, and toxicology services. This contract service is roughly 55% of the budget. Statically, 6.1% of reportable deaths end in autopsy. Contractual services are a necessary aspect of the department, considering the proximity of Pierce County to the Metro; we receive competitive pricing for this service.

**Pierce County
Position Description**


Name: Department: Law Enforcement
Position Title: Medical Examiner Pay Grade:
Date: Reports To: Law Enforcement Comm.

Purpose of position:

Under the general direction of the Law Enforcement Committee, the Medical Examiner is responsible for professionally and confidentially the duties set forth in Wisconsin State Statutes Chapters 59 and 979, 30.67(6), 48,981, 59.34 and others as may be amended or required by law. Upon appointment the medical examiner shall serve a 4-year term of office effective on the first Tuesday in January 2007.

Essential duties and responsibilities:

- Comprehensive knowledge of the statutes governing the position of the Medical Examiner
- Ability to, based on accepted medicolegal death investigation methods, determine the cause of death to a reasonable degree of medical certainty an associate manner of death as outlined by statutes;
- Respond to death calls and investigate, observe the death scene, question witnesses, and examine evidence to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the incident;
- Obtain personal data and medical history of decedent, by examining documents and interviewing relatives, friends and acquaintances;
- Properly complete the medical certification on a death certificate for every case reported under state statute 979.01, complying with standards for timeliness and completeness as issued by the State Registrar per state statute 69.18;
- Make decisions with respect to the necessity of an autopsy, toxicology and other testing;
- Ability to obtain biological samples in a method consistent with medical and legal standards of practice and those require by the State of Wisconsin;
- Obtain and securely maintain personal data and records;
- Communicate with the family and loved ones of the next of kin, including death notification and appropriate release of all information regarding the cause and manner of death;
- Testify as an expert witness concerning the facts and conclusions disclosed by autopsies, physical exams and other tests;
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies;
- Facilitate eye, tissue and organ donation;
- Oversee daily operation of the office of medical examiner, appointing, supervising and training competent deputies to act on behalf of the medical examiner in his or her absence;
- Managing property and equipment necessary to complete work
- Attend Law Enforcement meetings as directed by the committee
- Submit report of activity to County Board Committee's as requested throughout each year of term
- Attend mandatory training seminars put forth by the county and provide education to deputies.
- It is unlikely an employee will perform all the duties listed on a regular basis, nor is the list exhaustive in the sense it covers all the duties that an employee may be required to perform.

Additional tasks and responsibilities:

- Provide a written blood borne-pathogen exposure plan for all deputies;
- Prepare and update a county mass fatality plan as a reference for county emergency government plan;
- Provide risk management for the county physicians, hospitals and law enforcement.
- Educate the community as to the types of reportable deaths and the role of coroner/medical examiner as an advocate for the dead.
- Prepare department budget and direct implementation of expenditures;
- It is the medical examiner's duty to appoint and train Deputy Medical Examiners as needed throughout the course of the term. The Deputy Medical Examiners are responsible to the medical examiner. The medical examiner is responsible for all the Deputy Medical Examiners quality performance, procedures and annual training. The County reserves the right to approve all Deputy Medical Examiners.

Requirements:

- Completion of post high school training in one(1) or more of the following: paramedic training, registered nurse program (Bachelor diploma or ADN), medical degree, emergency medical technician, funeral directors;
- Current knowledge and practice of skills outlined within this position description;
- Completion of the medicolegal death investigator training course or completion of 32 hours of continued education sponsored by the Wisconsin Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners;
- Death scene investigator training or an equivalent combination of experience and training which provides the required knowledge, skills and abilities;
- Current Wisconsin driver's license, good driving record, in past 5 years and maintained throughout appointment term, driving infractions may be grounds for termination;
- Availability 24 hours/day, 7 days/week; coverage scheduled by medical examiner and reported to Pierce County Dispatch;
- Ability to meet the physical, and emotional requirements of position as outline in position description;

Language Ability and Interpersonal Communications:

- Ability to decide the time, place and sequence of operations within an organizational framework, as well as the ability to oversee their execution. Ability to analyze and categorize data and information using established criteria, in order to determine consequences and to identify and select alternatives.
- Ability to persuade, convince and train others. Ability to advise and interpret regarding the application of policies, procedures and standards to specific situations.
- Ability to utilize a variety of advisory and design data and information such as medical records and reports, incident and accident reports, investigation results, State statutes and emergency plans.
- Ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing including demonstrated ability to effectively interact with law enforcement personnel, attorneys, physicians, next-of-kin of deceased, and other people in highly stressful situations.

Physical requirements:

- Ability to coordinate eyes, hands, feet and limbs in performing skilled/semi-skilled movements such as examination of bodies. A large percentage of time is spent sitting, talking, hearing, handling and using near and far vision.
- Ability to exert moderate to heavy physical effort in accessing the deceased, which will include indoor and outdoor locations, typically involving some combination of walking, standing, stooping, kneeling, climbing, bending and reaching. Requires lifting, carrying, pushing/pulling 100 pounds or more.
- Ability to apply skills of position at all hours of the day and night.

Environmental Adaptability:

- Ability to work under moderately safe and comfortable conditions where exposure to environmental factors such as temperature variations and extreme weather conditions, odors, toxic agents, wetness, disease and/or dust may cause some discomfort and there is risk of minor injury.

Pierce County is an Equal Opportunity Employer. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the County will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals and encourages both prospective and current employees to discuss potential accommodations with the employer.

Medical Examiner

Date

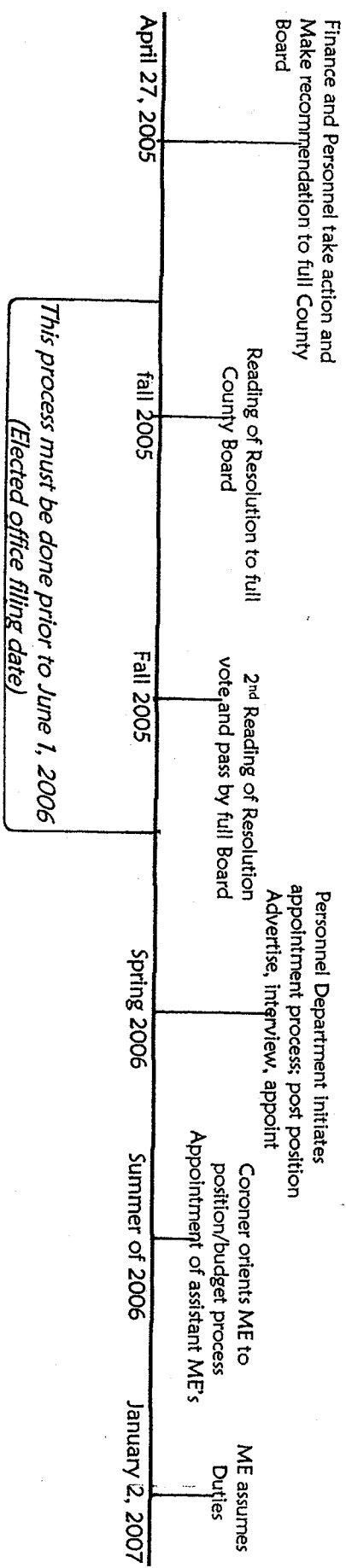
Personnel Designee

Date

This position description must be accompanied by an Oath of Office.

Pd-medical examiner 7/05

Timeline for Creation of Medical Examiner Position-Pierce County



DRAFT RESOLUTION EXAMPLE:

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Constitution provides that counties having a population of less than 500,000 have the option of instituting a Medical Examiner system and

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Statutes provide that counties may create a Medical Examiner position to perform the statutory duties of Coroner; and

WHEREAS, any action by the County Board of Supervisors to change from an elected Coroner to an appointed Medical Examiner must be taken prior to the date a Coroner is duly elected and can only become effective after the incumbent Coroner's term has expired; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of a Medical Examiner position will provide the county with the opportunity to establish qualifications for appointment to that position; and

WHEREAS, the job performance of the Medical Examiner will be supervised by the County Administrator and

WHEREAS, It has been determined by the Pierce County Board of Supervisors that an appointed Medical Examiner will best ensure the continuation of qualified and efficient services for Pierce County; and

WHEREAS, this new classification of Medical Examiner will be placed in the _____ pay grade

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Pierce does ordain as follows;

1. To abolish the elected office of Coroner and establish the position of Medical Examiner to become effective upon the termination of the current term on January 2, 2007; and
2. To establish the salary at Pay Grade _____
3. Direct the County Administrator to conduct an open recruitment for the Medical Examiner and select a candidate for the position through the County's regular selection procedure, subject the County Board confirmation; and
4. Authorize the County Clerk to issue checks pursuant to this resolution and the County Treasurer to honor said checks.