



# MARATHON COUNTY REGIONAL MORGUE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 23, 2023, at 10:00–11:00 am  
In-person and Virtual through WebEx

Members	Present/Web-Phone	Absent
Chair Craig McEwen	P	
Greg Bean		X
Dr. Michael Clark	W	
Dr. Lisa Grill Dodson	W	
Phil Rentmeester	P	
Scott Rifleman	W	
Kimm Weber		X
Mark Westen	W	
Greg Zorowski	W	

**Present in person:** Marathon County Medical Examiner Jessica Blahnik

**Also Present via Web:** Administrator Lance Leonhard, County Board Chair Kurt Gibbs, NTC Dean Dr. Jeannie Worden, and Kevin O'Brien reporter

- 1. Call Meeting to Order**  
Chair McEwen called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.
- 2. Public Comment – None**
- 3. MOTION BY WESTEN; SECOND BY DODSON TO APPROVE THE MINTUES OF THE July 11, 2022, REGIONAL MORGUE TASK FORCE MEETING. MOTION CARRIED.**
- 4. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports**
  - A. Informational updates, including funding options and ongoing discussions with potential stakeholders**

**Discussion:**

Blahnik shared that since the last Task Force meeting, Marathon County applied for the Neighborhood Investment grant, however, did not receive the grant funding. At the end of September, representatives from Marathon County and Northcentral Technical College had the opportunity to meet with a member of Governor Evers' staff to share the project plans in hopes to obtain support. The meeting went well. The Governor's budget was released last week. There is no line item specific for the project. However, one of his staff members reached out and expressed that Governor Evers does support the project and felt the Neighborhood Investment Funds would be a good funding opportunity. The advice was to reach out to the local legislators and members of the Joint Finance Committee to express the need to support including the Neighborhood Investment funds in the budget.

Administrator Leonhard shared that the Joint Finance Committee will be rewriting the Governor's base budget and we are not sure what the new budget will look like. He plans to work with the Wisconsin County's Association (WCA) for guidance on next steps. There are a few contacts that expressed the legislators support the project. He asked members of the Morgue Task Force to hold off contacting local legislators or members of the Joint Finance Committee until we can get a better understanding of the needed support and next steps. If a member of the Task Force is already meeting with a state legislator or member of the Joint Finance Committee for other matters, they are free to express their support for the project and need for funding.

Chair McEwen stated that Marathon County has \$2 million of ARPA funds allocated to the project already, however, there needs to be additional funding for the project to move forward.

Dr. Worden shared that she met Senator Felzkowski in January, and she supports the project. Senator Felzkowski will be touring Northcentral Technical College's new facilities in the near future and Dr. Worden could include Administrator Leonhard in the meeting.

Administrator Leonhard explained the next steps are to finalize the site location and start to work out the logistical aspects of a partnership with Northcentral Technical College. It would be ideal to complete the

architectural designs in 2023, which will take more than three months to complete. The request for proposal will hopefully go out January 2024 to start construction later in the year.

Chair McEwen stated that the Governor's budget should take effect in July, so we will hopefully know more information by then.

Dr. Dodson asked if we knew how much was allocated and what would happen if there were a funding gap? Administrator Leonhard stated that it was unknown at this time. We believe there is a \$150 million pool of funding, and it was not suggested how much we will receive, if any.

Dr. Clark asked what would happen if we do not get enough funds to cover the entire construction costs? Administrator Leonhard stated that we would have to reconfigure the building and figure out next steps at that time.

Dr. Dodson asked if the county had explored contacting local community foundations for funding? Blahnik explained that in the beginning of the project we had reached out to the community foundations for funding opportunities. They felt that a morgue facility falls under county operations and not something that foundations would support. However, the project has since grown to be more of a teaching facility with great partners, such as the Medical College of Wisconsin and Northcentral Technical College. With the new structure and operations plan, there may be opportunities for funding through the community foundations, such as the teaching spaces and family grief area, which are additional areas beyond county operations. Chair McEwen added that having the county allocate \$2 million of the ARPA funds towards the project also helps show that Marathon County is committed to the project.

Sherriff Westen stated that he will be meeting with Senator Felzkowski on another matter, however had asked if he could express his support for the project and need for state funding? Administrator Leonhard explained that yes, he could express his support. We just did not want everyone reaching out to the legislators for only the project at this time until we knew more. If there was an established meeting already taking place, you can express your support. It would be ideal if the Joint Finance Committee would allocate funds directly in the budget for the project, instead of being only eligible to apply for funding through the Neighborhood Investment Funds. If the Governor supports the project, it would be highly unlikely to be taken out of the budget. Administrator Leonhard had also stated someone from Marathon County will send out the PDF version of the project plans that were shared with Governor Evers.

**Follow Up:**

None

**5. Policy Issues Discussion and Committee Determination to the County Board for its Consideration**

**A. Recommendation of next steps to Public Safety Committee**

**Discussion:**

Administrator Leonhard and Chair McEwen stated that we are currently waiting for more information to know the next steps. We will provide an update to the Public Safety Committee once we know more about the Governor's budget.

**Action:**

None

**Follow Up:**

None

**6. Scheduling of Future Meetings and Identifying Agenda Topics**

Committee members are asked to bring ideas for future discussion.

**7. Announcements**

None

**8. Adjournment**

**MOTION BY RIFLEMAN; SECOND BY DR. DODSON TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 1028 AM. MOTION CARRIED.**