



**MARATHON COUNTY
REGIONAL MORGUE TASK FORCE MEETING
AGENDA**

Date & Time of Meeting: **Monday, July 11, 2022, 3pm to 4pm**

Meeting Location: **Medical Examiner's Office, 1308 West Street, Wausau WI**

Regional Morgue Task Force Committee Members: Craig McEwen, Chair; Greg Bean; Dr. Michael Clark, Dr. Lisa Grill Dodson; Phil Rentmeester; Scott Rifleman; Kimm Weber; Mark Westen; Greg Zoromski

Marathon County Mission Statement: *Marathon County Government serves people by leading, coordinating, and providing county, regional, and statewide initiatives. It directly or in cooperation with other public and private partners provides services and creates opportunities that make Marathon County and the surrounding area a preferred place to live, work, visit, and do business. (Last updated: 12-20-05)*

Persons wishing to attend the meeting by phone may call into the **telephone conference beginning five (5) minutes prior to the start time indicated above using the following number:**

Phone#: 1-408-418-9388

Access Code: 2499 195 2035

Attendee ID: (Do not have to enter a number, just press #)

When you enter the telephone conference, **PLEASE PUT YOUR PHONE ON MUTE!**

1. **Call Meeting to Order**
2. **Public Comment**
3. **Approval of April 1, 2022, Morgue Task Force Meeting Minutes**
4. **Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports**
 - A. Informational updates, including funding options (DHS, ARPA and State), business plan, facility costing, and ongoing discussions with potential stakeholders
5. **Policy Issues Discussion and Committee Determination to the County Board for its Consideration**
 - A. Recommendation of next steps to Public Safety Committee
6. **Scheduling of Future Meetings and Identifying Agenda Topics**
7. **Announcements**
8. **Adjournment**

"Any person planning to attend this meeting who needs some type of special accommodation in order to participate should call the County Clerk's Office at 715-261-1500 or e-mail countyclerk@co.marathon.wi.us one business day before the meeting.

SIGNED /s/ Craig McEwen
Presiding Officer or Designee

Emailed to: Wausau Daily Herald, City Pages, and
Other Media Groups

NOTICE POSTED AT COURTHOUSE

Emailed by: T. Ranallo

By: T. Ranallo

Date & Time: 7/7/2022 at 2pm

Date & Time: 7/7/2022 at 2pm



MARATHON COUNTY REGIONAL MORGUE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

Friday, April 1, 2022, at 9:30 am-10:30 pm
In-person and Virtual through WebEx

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

Present in person: Marathon County Medical Examiner's Office personnel Jessica Blahnik, Christina Wimmer, and Cortney Drake Heck

Present via Web or Phone: Administrator Lance Leonhard, Supervisor Jean Maszk, and Aliyah Cratsencerg, community member

1. **Call Meeting to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair McEwen at 9:30 am.

2. **Public Comment** – None

3. **MOTION BY DODSON; SECOND BY BEAN TO APPROVE THE MINTUES OF THE NOVEMBER 16, 2021, MORGUE TASK FORCE MEETING. MOTION CARRIED.**

4. **Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports**

A. Informational updates, including state grant application and other funding options, business plan, ongoing discussions with potential stakeholders, and pathologist utilization update

Discussion:

Blahnik shared that Marathon County applied for the Neighborhood Investment Grant in November 2021. Unfortunately, Marathon County was not selected to receive grant funding; the project did not meet the grant criteria. Blahnik, Wimmer, Administrator Leonhard and Chair McEwen met to discuss the next steps to bring forward to this committee. Administrator Leonhard shared that he had continued discussions with state legislators, primarily Senator Petrowski, who had been an advocate for the project. Senator Petrowski will continue to explore state funding options.

Administrator Leonhard proposed a plan for the county to allocate \$2 million of the county's ARPA funds towards the project, with the rest of the funding coming from a capital campaign and/or state funding. He shared that in 2019 North Central Health Care conducted a capital campaign for their warm water therapy pool and it was exceptionally successful, especially after funding was already allocated from the county. To allocate the county's ARPA funds, Blahnik would have to complete an application for the funding, which would need to go to Public Safety Committee, then to Finance/Human Resources for approval.

Chair McEwen and Supervisor Maszk both expressed that community foundations are more supportive of county initiatives once the county has allocated funding towards the project. Both also felt this was a good plan.

Administrator Leonhard explained further that he would still like to engage with Senator Petrowski for state funding, including meeting with Governor Evers, as there is federal ARPA funding available that may be applied towards the project. As for the county APRA funding, all of the funds need to be allocated by December 31, 2024, and expended by 2026. There will need to be a deadline in place for the capital campaign to ensure county can utilize the funding. The next step would be to bring the APRA funding request forward to the Public Safety Committee for the April meeting.

Blahnik shared that WIPFLI Consulting Firm is currently working to update the business plan; it should be completed in May 2022. Administrator Leonhard stated he also would like to continue discussions with the health care systems; Aspirus and Marshfield Clinic.

Administrator Leonhard questioned the Task Force if there was value to engage with other counties for funding towards the construction costs as part of the capital campaign. Rifleman stated that Portage County has always been supportive of the project and should be approached. Sheriff Westen stated that Langlade County was allocated far less ARPA funds than Marathon County, however it would not hurt to reach out. Administrator Leonhard explained that the Marathon County could do a five-year cost saving projection for the other counties of having a closer facility and ask for half of the cost savings. It will not be a lot of money; however, it shows commitment and support from all the agencies. Chair McEwen said it may be beneficial to approach the municipalities for small amounts of funding to show support of the project. Sheriff Westen added to include the police departments.

Bean asked the Task Force how to move forward with requesting donations from organizations and who will lead those efforts? Administrator Leonhard stated that Marathon County will need to come up with a strategic capital campaign plan and needs to identify potential community stake holders and foundations. Members of the Task Force could help with the capital campaign. He would continue discussions with the state legislators. Sheriff Westen offered to support the capital campaign and had requested a letter be drafted, along with talking points for the project. He also mentioned to reach out to the Badge Sheriff's Association for support, along with local police departments. Zoromski suggested to obtain letters of support from the local funeral homes. Blahnik reminded the Task Force that for the Neighborhood Investment Grant application, Marathon County had received roughly 20 letters of support from key community partners and could work on obtaining additional letters. Administrator Leonhard stated that the next plan of action is to have an internal meeting to discuss the capital campaign.

Blahnik shared that University of Wisconsin (UW) Madison Pathology Department had their new forensic pathologist start in February, however one of their clinical pathologists will be retiring. Dane County also had a pathologist resign; however, they will be having a new pathologist starting after her fellowship in 2023. The Fond du Lac County Medical Examiner continues to be booked out for up to one week at a time, however UW Madison has been assisting additional counties on an as-needed basis to help with the backup of autopsies.

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 both stated this topic was discussed during 4A. Administrator Leonhard reiterated the timeframe for approval of allocating ARPA funding towards the project; it would not be until mid-year.

Action:

MOTION BY BEAN; SECOND BY RIFLEMAN TO BRING THE RECOMMENDATION TO PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE TO MOVE FORWARD WITH AN APPLICATION TO ALLOCATE \$2 MILLION OF THE COUNTY'S ARPA FUNDS TOWARDS THE REGIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCE CENTER PROJECT. MOTION CARRIED.

Follow Up:

Forward recommendation to Public Safety Committee for consideration.

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 BEAN; SECOND BY RIFLEMAN TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 10:15 A.M. MOTION CARRIED.



**STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN:
Marathon County Regional Forensic
Science Center**

June 21, 2022

Marathon County Regional Forensic Science Center

Introduction

The Marathon County Medical Examiner's Office ("Medical Examiner's Office") is charged with investigating and determining the cause, circumstances, and manner in each case of sudden, unexpected, or unusual deaths. The Medical Examiner's Office is also responsible for assisting with final disposition for all remains, mass fatality preparedness, death prevention initiatives (highway safety, suicide, infant/child, overdose), community awareness and education (emergency medical services, law enforcement, drug prevention, public safety, high school, and college students), close follow-up with affected families, and collaboration with other agencies involved in death investigations.

Wisconsin Statute (section 979.01) requires that any person having knowledge of an unexplained, unusual, or suspicious death shall report such death to the medical examiner for investigation. These deaths may include homicide, suicide, accidents whether the injury is or is not the primary cause of death, death without a physician in attendance, or death in which the attending physician refuses to sign the death certificate. Investigations are conducted by the medical examiner's office for certifying the cause and manner of death. Often, an autopsy is needed to meet the state requirements.

Furthermore, if a death appears to be a result of unlawful means, it is reported to the District Attorney pursuant to §979.04 (2), as well as the appropriate local law enforcement agency, for further investigation and possible criminal prosecution. Additional investigative responsibilities described in §979.10 direct the medical examiner to view the decedents and make an investigation into the cause and manner of all deaths in which the next of kin selected cremation for disposition.

Overall, the quality and capacity of the medical examiner system is closely linked with the quality of the other systems it interacts with, namely the public health system, the public safety system, and the judicial system. Thorough, high-quality death investigations by well-trained personnel ensure the cause and manner of death are correctly identified, recorded, and reported. Standardized reporting of deaths and death-related data allows for more accurate identification of risk factors, health concerns, and mortality trends across the state. Accurate data on cases of infant mortality, suicides, communicable and chronic diseases, fatal injuries (both intentional and unintentional), and drug-related deaths or overdoses can be used to inform public health efforts and vie for or justify the use of funds and activities aimed at prevention and health promotion in these areas. The resulting data could also be used to inform judicial proceedings that can impact the overall safety of the community.

Currently, Marathon County must outsource its autopsy cases to providers located in southern Wisconsin. This arrangement presents some challenges, including but not limited to delayed autopsies, delayed results, lack of available space to conduct body examinations, travel for law enforcement and death investigators, transportation of the decedent, lack of refrigeration/storage space, and a poor experience for family members. The counties of central and northern Wisconsin face similar challenges.

Project Description

The creation of the Marathon County Regional Forensic Science Center ("Forensic Science Center"), located in Wausau, will focus on enhancing the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of death investigations in Marathon County and central and northern Wisconsin.

Vision: To provide enhanced forensic pathology services for the citizens of Marathon County and the central and northern Wisconsin regional counties. The Medical Examiner's Office will operate and function as a highly respected regional forensic science center.

Mission: To provide high-quality medico-legal death investigations and forensic science center services to the citizens of Marathon County, along with consultation, forensic pathology, and educational opportunities to central and northern Wisconsin regional counties.

The Forensic Science Center will improve the quality of the death investigation process not only for Marathon County but also for the central and northern Wisconsin regional counties. In addition to providing forensic pathology services, the Forensic Science Center will focus on education. This will be accomplished by offering training and continuing education opportunities to coroner and medical examiners, law enforcement, district attorney offices, emergency medical service providers, and other related agencies/organizations. The pathologists and staff will also be available for consultations, on an as-needed basis, to offer guidance on standards and best practices.

After establishing successful operations, the Forensic Science Center will strive to become accredited through the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) and the College of American Pathologists (CAP). The accreditation process is known to be challenging; however, it clearly outlines best practice guidelines and ensures internal operations are meeting established industry standards. All of the internal policies and procedures that will be created for the facility will be based on the standards set forth by NAME and CAP.

Services

Due to Marathon County being centrally located in the state and ease of access via Interstate 39, Highway 51, and Highway 29, there is a unique opportunity to improve forensic pathology services for the central and northern Wisconsin regions. Currently, all forensic pathology providers are located in southern and southeastern Wisconsin, and these providers have an overwhelming caseload.

Regional challenges such as (1) delayed autopsies and reporting, (2) lengthy transportation and the related cost, (3) the travel burden on law enforcement, (4) lack of refrigeration, (5) unpreparedness for mass casualties, and (6) prosecutorial delays and poor family experience can all be improved with achieving the vision of the Forensic Science Center. Moreover, a proposed collaborative relationship between Marathon County and Northcentral Technical College ("NTC"), together with the proximity of the proposed Regional Forensic Science Center to the Medical College of Wisconsin-Wausau site, will create a best-in-class forensic pathology educational experience. This educational collaborative has the potential to serve a significant role in addressing the statewide shortage of forensic pathology professionals.

The Forensic Science Center will offer the following services:

- Forensic autopsies
- Medical autopsies
- Livery service
- Decedent refrigerated storage
- Space for tissue procurement
- Expert forensic testimony
- Forensic consultation
- Education
- Regional mass fatality preparedness
- Assistance with medical research

Market Assessment

Assumptions for the future utilization of the Forensic Science Center were based on an analysis of the following factors that may affect autopsy volume:

- Location of other forensic autopsy providers
- Surveys of various counties
- Surveys of local hospitals and health systems
- Demographics and other societal factors
- The ability to develop quality operations and services
- Projected autopsy needs for the state

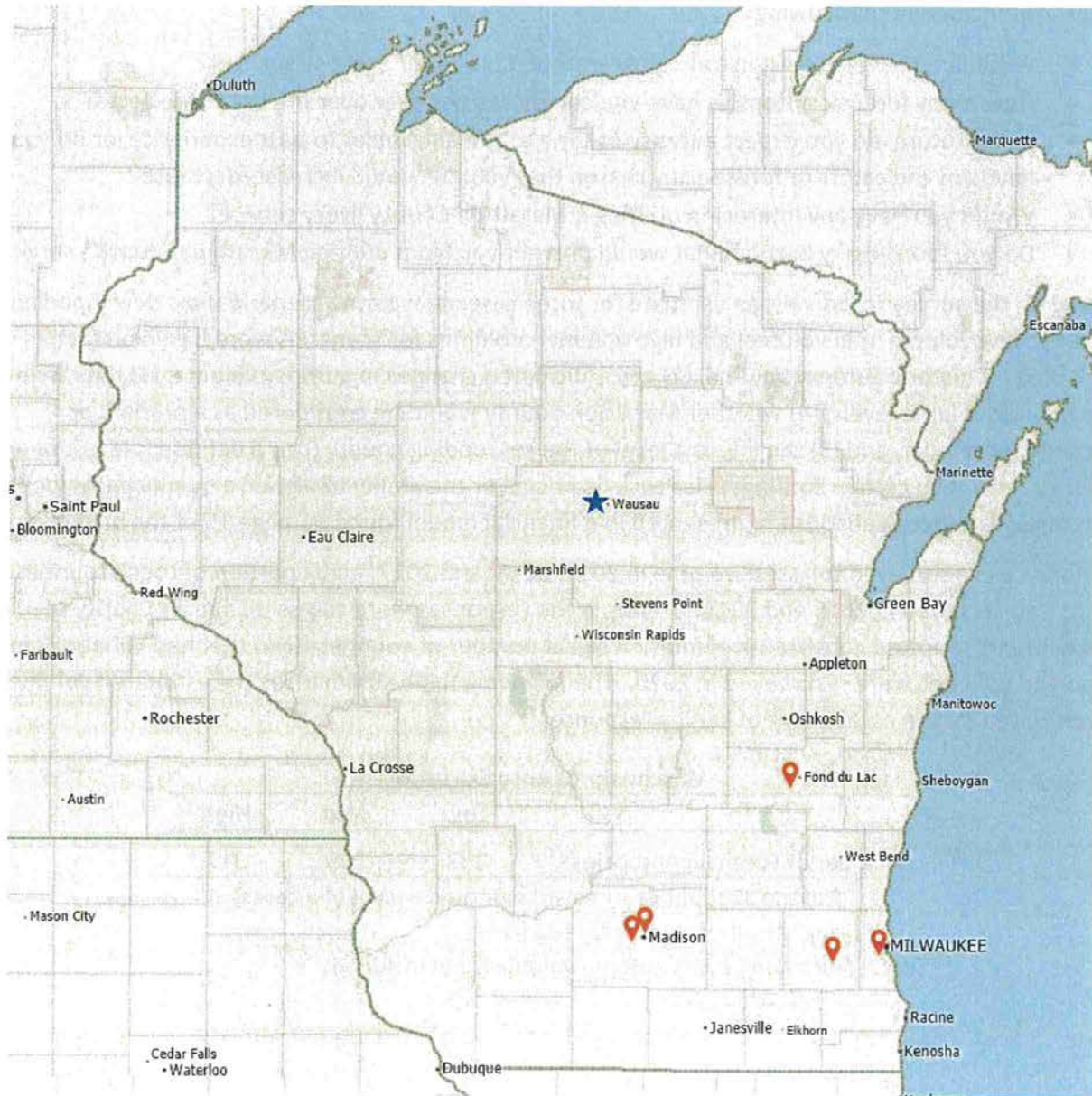
Forensic Autopsy Providers

There are currently five providers of forensic autopsy services in Wisconsin:

- Dane County
- Fond du Lac County
- Milwaukee County
- Waukesha County (does not serve other counties)
- University of Wisconsin-Madison

Brown County completed construction of a new medical examiner facility in 2022. Publicly available records indicate it is planned to serve the forensic pathology needs of Brown County, Door County, and Oconto County and will be operated by the Dane County Medical Examiner's Office. Currently, no pathologists have been recruited to staff this facility.

Although four of the five providers are open to serve the state as a whole, it is important to note they are all located in southern and southeastern Wisconsin. The following map depicts the location of the forensic autopsy providers:



County Surveys

To obtain an understanding of the interest in utilizing Marathon County for autopsy services and the related potential caseload, 35 counties in northern and central Wisconsin were surveyed. Survey questions included the following:

- Would you have interest in utilizing Marathon County for autopsy services?
- How many forensic autopsies have you completed per year over the last three years?
- In the future, do you expect autopsy volume to remain similar to past experience, or do you have any indicators or foresee any reason that volume would increase/decrease?
- Would you have any interest in utilizing a Marathon County livery service?
- Do you foresee any barriers that would prevent you from utilizing Marathon County’s services?

Based on the survey responses, an estimate for three caseload volume scenarios was developed and includes low volume, mid volume, and high volume. Volumes for scenarios were based on factors including (1) historic autopsy volume, (2) any anticipated changes in autopsy volume, (3) the range of the historic volume levels, (4) whether Marathon County would be considered as a primary or secondary provider, and (5) the interest level of the responding county (i.e., a definite interest or an interest level with certain contingencies such as pricing or the ability to attract a quality pathologist). The three caseload scenarios are presented in a financial model found on page 15 of the business plan.

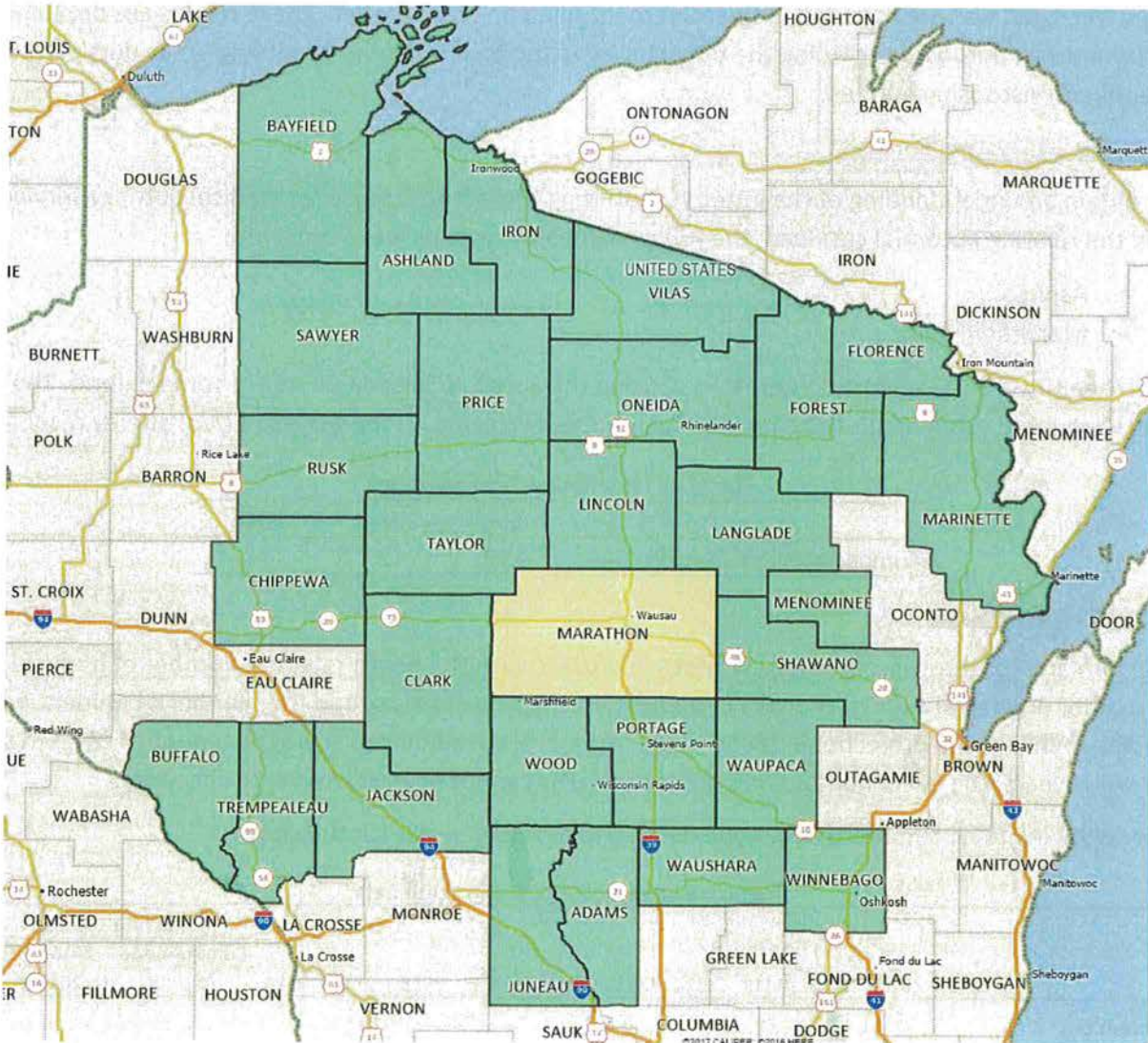
Counties were surveyed to assess volume in 2019, 2018, and 2017, and a portion of these counties were also surveyed in 2015 and 2014. Trends in the responses were assessed, and a majority of respondents reported consistent volumes. A select number of counties (five) that had variations in the reported volumes were resurveyed in 2020. The following table summarizes the estimated volume levels based on the assessment of survey responses:

Wisconsin County Surveys ⁽¹⁾			
	Low	Mid	High
Number of Forensic Autopsies ⁽²⁾	133	235	317

(1) 28 of the 35 counties surveyed indicated a level of interest in utilizing Marathon County for services.

(2) Marathon County autopsy volume is not included.

The following map depicts the counties that indicated they have a level of interest in utilizing Marathon County for services:



Upper Peninsula of Michigan

Certain counties located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan were also contacted as part of the survey process, including Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Mackinac, Marquette, and Ontonagon. Many of these counties reported forensic autopsy access issues similar to the feedback provided by Wisconsin counties. There was also reported interest in utilizing Marathon County as a pathology provider.

Due to staffing changes within some of the surveyed medical examiner’s offices, there was some inconsistency in reported interest and volume levels over the survey period, and therefore volume from Michigan was not included in the aforementioned financial model. These results are disclosed for informational purposes regarding the opportunity to increase volumes by serving areas outside the identified Wisconsin counties.

Local Health System Surveys

To obtain an understanding of the interest in utilizing Marathon County for medical autopsy services and the relating potential caseload, the following health systems were surveyed:

- Aspirus
- Marshfield Clinic

Each health system expressed interest in utilizing the Forensic Science Center to some extent. The following table summarizes the estimated volume levels based on the assessment of survey responses:

Hospital/Health System Surveys			
	Low	Mid	High
Number of Medical Autopsies	20	27	48

Demand for Services

The demand for forensic pathology services fluctuates with the death rate, the number of homicides and other unnatural events, changes in population size and makeup, and the number of unidentified bodies. While some projections can be made in general based on the average number of cases in the previous years, the exact number and types of deaths cannot be predicted with certainty.

The following table summarizes historic death and autopsy trends for the state:

Wisconsin Historic Autopsy and Death Data												Percent Change ⁽¹⁾		
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Compounded Annual	2014 to 2019	2010 to 2019
Number of:														
Autopsies	3,315	3,408	3,468	3,611	3,791	3,906	4,218	4,301	4,241	4,510	4,614	3.60%	18.97%	36.05%
Deaths	47,212	48,101	48,225	49,917	50,137	51,251	51,788	52,679	53,680	54,195	62,704	1.48%	8.09%	14.79%
Autopsies as a														
Percent of Deaths	7.02%	7.09%	7.19%	7.23%	7.56%	7.62%	8.14%	8.16%	7.90%	8.32%	7.36%	1.85%	10.06%	18.52%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services

(1) Calculated based on 2019 to exclude impact of COVID-19.

Based on the state’s death and autopsy trends and population projections, and excluding the impact of COVID-19 on the number of deaths, the following table estimates the future autopsy needs of the state:

Wisconsin Autopsy Projections		
	2022	2027
Deaths as a Percent of Population ⁽¹⁾	0.93%	0.94%
Total Population ⁽²⁾	5,951,856	6,069,845
Projected Deaths	55,244	57,172
Autopsies as a Percent of Deaths ⁽¹⁾	8.28%	8.43%
Projected Autopsies	4,574	4,821

Source: Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services and ESRI

(1) Based on historic data and trends

(2) Wisconsin total population estimated for 2022 and projected for 2027

Strategy

Partnerships are needed to make a regional morgue work operationally and financially. The Forensic Science Center will continue to build working relationships with the local health systems to provide not only autopsy services, but also educational opportunities. During preliminary partnership discussions with the health systems, it was identified that many health systems that previously provided autopsy services (for internal autopsies and for coroner/medical examiner offices) are no longer providing those services. Furthermore, it was discovered that many physicians were unaware of their ability to order autopsies after receiving family consent. Due to the lack of understanding, additional information has been provided to the health systems, clarifying how to order an autopsy and the benefits autopsies can provide to their physicians and patient care.

The Forensic Science Center will partner with Versiti and the American Tissue Services Foundation (ATSF) to increase the number of successful tissue donors and provide a consistent local place for the tissue procurement process to take place. This will not only benefit the recipient of the donated tissue but also provide the family grief support services and the knowledge that their loved one had a significant impact on another person’s and family’s life.

Another potential for partnership was identified with the Medical College of Wisconsin. The Forensic Science Center would create a partnership to provide educational opportunities to the medical students. The educational services would include the ability to observe autopsies and participate in gross anatomy lab. The forensic pathologist would also be able to provide in-person lectures and case studies. These opportunities have been identified as a current need to enhance medical student training. Finally, a proposed collaboration between Marathon County and NTC would significantly expand forensic pathology professional educational opportunities. Moreover, the potential of locating the forensic science center on the NTC campus would allow the opportunity for other medical professional and public safety degree programs to observe forensic and medical autopsies, significantly enhancing the educational offerings.

County Surveys

During the county survey process, certain questions were asked to assist with completing the financial projection. Questions included the following:

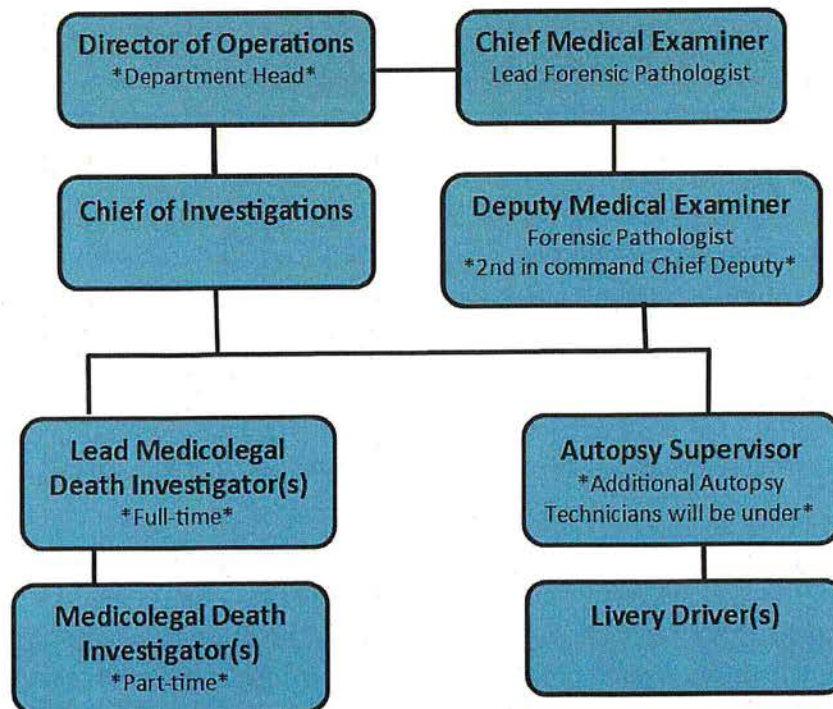
- What has been your annual “all in” cost relating to autopsies?
- What portion of the cost is related to transportation?
- Do you have a preference how you are charged for autopsy services—a la carte or all-inclusive?

The Forensic Science Center incorporated this feedback when setting the rate structure. Another theme from the county surveys was that the quality of the service provided will be a significant driver of volume. This feedback was considered with the salary that was established for the head pathologist and the desire to attract a highly capable provider. Overall, the Forensic Science Center will focus on becoming a highly respected and valuable regional provider.

Management and Organization

The Medical Examiner’s Office is a department within Marathon County government. The medical examiner is appointed by the administrator for Marathon County and works in collaboration with trained medicolegal death investigators, forensic pathologist(s), autopsy support staff, and the director of operations to provide postmortem examinations, comprehensive death investigations, and educational offerings and to identify prevention measures to reduce the number of premature deaths. Through a partnership with the North Central Wisconsin Hospital Emergency Response Coalition, the Medical Examiner’s Office has been identified as a regional asset for mass fatality preparedness.

The following summarizes the planned organizational chart for the Forensic Science Center:



The Marathon County Finance Department and County Treasurer will be responsible for assisting in the billing process for services provided and processing the invoices for expenses incurred. The Employee Resources Department will be tasked with assisting in the recruitment efforts for new employees. There will need to be a discussion between the Forensic Science Center and related departments to determine cost-effective solutions such as position sharing for certain administrative tasks.

Community and Regional Impact

In addition to improving the death investigation process, the Forensic Science Center will provide additional local and regional benefits.

Marathon County Impact

Marathon County is known for offering enhanced professional services to its residents. Expanding the Medical Examiner's Office to include the Forensic Science Center will offer another premier service to the citizens of Marathon County and help it to be considered a regional asset. Benefits the Forensic Science Center will offer to local government and residents include the following:

- Improved prevention initiatives
- Increased accuracy of death investigations due to the ability to conduct more autopsies
- Ability for interested agencies to attend autopsies (law enforcement/district attorney's office)
- Educational opportunities and training
- Easier direct access to the forensic pathologists for related agencies
- Decreased dependence on county tax levy
- Significant reduction in travel for staff and law enforcement

The local Forensic Science Center will also improve public safety within the community. When there are suspicious death scenes, the forensic pathologist will have the opportunity to respond directly to the death scene and witness firsthand the investigator's findings. In situations when the victim is still alive, the forensic pathologist expertise in trauma and injury identification will be available for consultations to law enforcement agencies and healthcare providers. This additional resource will be ideal in situations of child or elder abuse, domestic violence, assaults, gunshot wounds, or other types of violence. There will also be education and training opportunities for law enforcement, healthcare professionals, and others involved in investigations on forensic pathology, injury identification, and investigative techniques.

There will also be improved efficiency and productivity within the Medical Examiner's Office as well as local law enforcement agencies. The Forensic Science Center will significantly reduce travel when there is the need for forensic pathology services. Law enforcement agencies attend roughly 60% of all of the autopsies conducted and must travel with the Medical Examiner's Office to Fond du Lac or Madison, Wisconsin, for the autopsies. The lead detective assigned to the investigation will also be able to attend autopsies, which will result in improved case outcomes. For deaths that require the scene to be held by law enforcement until the autopsy is completed, having a local forensic pathologist will result in the release of the death scene in a timelier matter which will also free up law enforcement staff for other duties.

There are additional unproductive time constraints relating to not having a local facility. Based on a process improvement analysis, 690 unproductive hours per year will be eliminated from the Medical Examiner's Office, assuming 75 autopsies are conducted per year. This equates to annual savings of approximately \$31,500 in unproductive wages. Another \$17,100 in expenses relating to travel and outsourcing will be eliminated.

Efficiencies will also be gained for local law enforcement agencies relating to eliminated wages for unproductive travel time and travel expenses, which are estimated to total approximately \$25,300 of annual savings. Based on the process improvement analysis, assuming 75 autopsies are conducted, annual savings are estimated to total \$73,900.

Regional Impact

The Forensic Science Center will be an asset to the central and northern Wisconsin regional counties by providing the following:

- Improved regional emergency/mass fatality preparedness
- Improved working relationships with other counties
- Training, education, and support
- Easier access to forensic pathology services and consultations
- Ability to increase the number of autopsies conducted
- Increased opportunity for tissue donation
- Increased forensic consultation opportunities for law enforcement agencies
- Enhanced educational opportunities and the ability to view autopsies
- Ability to assist in medical research
- Medical autopsy provider to health systems throughout the region
- Enhanced preventative services

Economic Impact

The Forensic Science Center will have a positive effect on the local economy. As a regional resource, there will be increased travel to the Wausau area, which will increase business for gas stations, restaurants, and hotels. Funeral homes will also see an increase in business due to more decedents coming into Marathon County for pathology services and tissue donation. Through collaboration with interested partners, the Forensic Science Center will provide teaching services for local universities, colleges, and healthcare institutions. Providing enhanced educational opportunities will also improve the likelihood of retaining highly skilled professionals in the region. Lastly, the Forensic Science Center will create new jobs.

Family Impact

One of the most significant benefits the Forensic Science Center will offer is the improved service and experience for families of the decedents. Benefits include the following:

- Improved ability to honor religious and cultural requests/practices
- Dedicated family room (viewing/meeting area) that meets trauma-informed care standards
- Quicker release of the decedent to the funeral home for final disposition
- Ability to meet with the forensic pathologist to discuss case results
- Enhanced qualifications for tissue donation
- Greater opportunity to identify incidental findings that relate to family medical history (hereditary conditions)
- An option for families to have private autopsies conducted (cases that do not qualify for forensic)

Educational Impact

The Forensic Science Center will serve as a regional teaching facility, offering numerous training opportunities to various departments and organizations. In partnership with Medical College of Wisconsin, medical students would have the opportunity to observe autopsies and have a hands-on experience with anatomy and pathophysiology. These experiences are currently unavailable to students at the Wausau campus; the Milwaukee campus has a partnership to offer these services with the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office. There is also the opportunity for the forensic pathologist to assist with medical lectures, as it pertains to pathology, to enhance the medical student's education.

In collaboration with NTC, public safety and health science students would have the opportunity to observe an autopsy as part of their training and participate in clinical rotations within the Forensic Science Center, as deemed appropriate for their program. Forensic pathologists and death investigation staff would be able to offer lectures to expand on important topics in the student's curriculum. There will also be an opportunity for NTC to create new programs or certifications to improve death investigation, law enforcement, and forensics in the medical field.

Lastly, the Forensic Science Center will offer training opportunities to regional law enforcement, coroner and medical examiner offices, district attorney offices, emergency medical service providers, and related fields. The training will help to improve death investigation services and criminal justice investigations throughout the region. Currently, there is limited training opportunities in the northern portion of Wisconsin and rural counties struggle to send staff members to educational offerings in the southern portion of the state due to cost and time investment. The Forensic Science Center location, in a central Wisconsin, which provide more convenient access. In addition, the facility will allow for education to be offered virtually to agencies that normally could not travel to attend training.

Pandemics

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, regional counties and healthcare organizations turned to the Medical Examiner’s Office for assistance and advice on best-practice standards. The Medical Examiner’s Office was identified as a key community stakeholder for fatality management and response. As part of this responsibility, the Medical Examiner’s Office, with the assistance of Emergency Management, secured a refrigerated trailer that was donated by a local business and purchased a stationary walk-in refrigerator with a racking system. The decedent storage capacity allowed Marathon County to support only the local and immediate surrounding counties and local hospitals for a decedent surge. In the event the pandemic were to escalate or be combined with any other surge in deaths, the Medical Examiner’s Office would not be able to handle the increased deaths with the current decedent storage option.

In partnership with the National Guard and the Hospital Emergency Response Coalition, a Marathon County-owned refrigerated storage facility was identified as a state-wide asset for a mass surge of deaths related to the pandemic. The National Guard was charged with running the operations in the event the facility was opened, with the Medical Examiner’s Office assisting. This Marathon County asset will not be available long term; however, the creation of the Forensic Science Center will include a dedicated multi-decedent storage space that will increase the ability to manage mass fatalities in the region.

Other Key Factors

Demographics

Population growth will likely be a factor in the increased need for autopsy services. The following table summarizes the long-term population projections for Marathon County:

Long-Range Population Trends						
	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Total Population	136,510	142,200	146,595	150,130	152,120	152,790
Population by age:						
20-64	79,010	79,170	77,970	77,280	77,260	77,850
65+	21,380	25,350	29,745	33,650	35,800	36,470
75+	9,510	10,590	12,705	15,660	18,630	20,890
85+	3,160	3,220	3,485	4,110	5,200	6,590
% Change Trends by Age Group						
	'15-'20	'20-'25	'25-'30	'30-'35	'35-'40	
Total Population		4.2%	3.1%	2.4%	1.3%	0.4%
Population by age:						
20-64	-	0.2%	-1.5%	-0.9%	0.0%	0.8%
65+	-	18.6%	17.3%	13.1%	6.4%	1.9%
75+	-	11.4%	20.0%	23.3%	19.0%	12.1%
85+	-	1.9%	8.2%	17.9%	26.5%	26.7%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration

Drug-Related Deaths

Drug overdose deaths have risen sharply in the past five years. County survey respondents consistently indicated they expect this trend to continue and to lead to increased autopsy needs. The following table summarizes the drug-related death statistics for Wisconsin:

Wisconsin Historic Drug-Related Death Data

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Percent Change ⁽³⁾			
												Compounded Annual	2014 to 2019	2010 to 2019	
Number of:															
Opioid-Related Deaths ⁽¹⁾	373	582	467	544	579	575	783	876	802	916	1,226	14.56%	58.20%	145.58%	
All Drug-Related Deaths ⁽²⁾	625	687	714	843	843	872	1,031	1,117	1,075	1,189	1,570	9.02%	41.04%	90.24%	

Source: Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services

- (1) Includes unintentional and undetermined overdose deaths.
- (2) Includes intentional, unintentional, and undetermined overdose deaths.
- (3) Calculated based on 2019 to exclude impact of COVID-19.

Marketing and Competitive Advantage

The Forensic Science Center will benefit from the following competitive advantages in comparison with the other providers in the state:

- Ease of access
- Shorter transport distance and time for many counties
- Livery services
- Improved turnaround times
- High-quality local health systems
- Competitive pricing/rate structure
- State crime lab branch (located in Wausau)
- Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) office (located in Wausau)

Facility Needs, Costs, and Site

Marathon County engaged Somerville Architects & Engineers to provide an estimate of space needs and construction costs for a new build Forensic Science Center facility. Somerville estimates a five-month facility design and engineering process and an eight-month construction period.

Total square footage of the facility is estimated to be 17,478, including the following:

- Office and administrative area
- Family wellness room
- Pathology area to include three autopsy stations, dedicated tissue recovery suite, x-ray room, and specimen storage
- General morgue support area to include decedent intake and release, morgue tech office, laundry, referral county debrief room, and cart cleaning station
- Dedicated teaching space to include a pathology learning lab, autopsy observation deck, and a large conference room to accommodate up to 50 students

- Decedent storage to include a secured walk-in refrigerator and walk-in freezer, both with racking systems
- Sanitary areas to include a dedicated guest bathroom, male and female bathrooms in the office area, and male and female locker rooms with showers
- Heated sally port for response vehicle parking, intake and release of decedents, dedicated decedent vehicle and equipment decontamination area, and an additional storage and mechanical room

Total cost of construction for a new facility is estimated to range from \$10,155,000 to \$10,627,700, broken down as follows:

- Site improvements and building construction – \$8,564,200 to \$8,913,800
- Design fees – \$856,400 to \$891,400
- Furniture and equipment – \$460,000 to \$530,000
- Plan review, zoning, permits, survey, geotechnical – \$34,500 to \$42,500
- Cost of issuance - \$250,000 to \$260,000

Marathon County has identified several county owned locations in Wausau that are available for utilization to construct the Forensic Science Center facility. Some of the identified locations are vacant, others will require demolition of an existing building. In the event building demolition is required, Somerville estimated an increase to construction costs of \$600,000. The NTC Campus is also a potential site for the Forensic Science Center and NTC leadership are working to identify suitable sites.

Somerville was also engaged to complete a preliminary site needs plan and determined a land need of 2.0 to 2.7 acres. All identified locations meet the land need, as well as other identified site requirements, including:

- Easy access from Interstate 39 and Highway 29 for referral counties and law enforcement agencies
- Location within the Wausau Metro Area
- Location near community partners including Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Marshfield Medical Center-Weston, the Medical College of Wisconsin, Northcentral Technical College, and local funeral homes
- Nondescript area that can be secured via fencing
- Easy access to community businesses, for staff, families, and individuals traveling from referral counties, including businesses such as gas stations, restaurants, and hotels

Financial Plan and Projections

To assess the financial viability of the Forensic Science Center, financial projections were developed. Due to the range of autopsy volumes reported during the surveys of Wisconsin counties and the various levels of reported interest, three volume level scenarios were developed. Earnings from operations will be highly dependent on the volume of autopsies and the total number of autopsies conducted by each pathologist. Industry standards suggest one pathologist should handle a maximum of 250 autopsies per year. Ideally, the Forensic Science Center would operate as close to a ratio of 250 autopsies per pathologist as possible.

The following table summarizes the results of the financial projections:

Projected Statement of Cash Flow

	Volume Scenarios		
	Low	Mid	High
Operating revenue:			
Autopsy revenue:			
Forensic	\$ 212,800	\$ 376,000	\$ 507,200
Medical	60,000	81,000	144,000
Livery services	51,800	76,200	109,300
Other operating revenue	77,700	97,800	125,900
Total operating revenue	402,300	631,000	886,400
Expenses:			
New expenses:			
Salaries and wages	303,000	503,000	589,600
Employee benefits	97,600	152,800	190,600
Administrative	8,800	8,800	8,800
Supplies and other	31,700	49,100	62,200
Livery	27,500	41,900	60,800
Utilities	26,000	26,000	26,000
Avoided expenses:			
Outsourcing autopsy	(116,300)	(116,300)	(116,300)
Travel	(19,100)	(19,100)	(19,100)
Sheriff's and police department	(23,200)	(23,200)	(23,200)
Total impact on expenses (excluding depreciation and interest)	336,000	623,000	779,400
Earnings before depreciation and interest	66,300	8,000	107,000
Less: Debt payment (principal and interest)	776,700	776,700	776,700
Net increase (decrease) in cash	\$ (710,400)	\$ (768,700)	\$ (669,700)

The projections were based on survey results (counties, hospitals, and tissue procurement organizations), interviews with other pathology providers, operational data from other pathology providers, and actual Marathon County expenses. The projections were developed to estimate cash flows for one year of full, ramped-up operations. The projections do not include assumptions relating to any potential partnership or available grant funding. Finally, the projections were based on financial data provided in the years 2020 and 2021; future year results may vary based on factors including, but not limited to, autopsy and other service rate increases, wage rate increases, and inflation in general.

The financial projections were based on the following assumptions:

Revenue

- Forensic and medical autopsies: Based on volume and an all-inclusive rate per autopsy of \$1,600 and \$3,000 for forensic and medical autopsies, respectively; based on market rates.
- Livery services: Flat rate for each trip less than 20 miles of \$150; for each trip greater than 20 miles, an additional fee of \$1.50 per mile; based on market rates. Mileage was calculated from Wausau to the most centrally located population center for each county that responded as being interested in utilizing a livery service. Volume based on survey responses.
- Other operating revenue: Includes expert testimony, tissue procurement facility rental fees, body storage, bioseal, x-rays, body intake/release, hardware extraction, and brain extraction. Volumes fluctuate based on autopsy volumes, and fees are based on market rates.

Expenses

- Salaries and wages:
 - Head forensic pathologist – Salary set at \$260,000 based on other providers in the state and Midwest. One FTE is assumed for all scenarios.
 - Pathologist – Salary set at \$200,000 based on other providers in the state and Midwest. One FTE is assumed for mid- and high-volume scenarios; position is excluded from the low-volume scenario.
 - Autopsy technician – Salary set at \$43,000 based on Marathon County salary structure. One FTE is assumed for low- and mid-volume scenarios; 1.5 FTEs are assumed for high-volume scenario.
 - Death investigator – Salary set at \$65,000 based on Marathon County salary structure. No FTEs are assumed for low- and mid-volume scenarios; 1.0 FTEs are assumed for high-volume scenario.
- Employee benefits: Based on Marathon County benefit package.
 - Projected at approximately 26% of salaries for the pathologists.
 - Projected at approximately 75% of salaries for other employees at the low- and mid-volume scenarios.
 - Projected at approximately 54% of salaries for other employees at the high-volume scenario. This is lower than the low- and mid-volume scenarios because a part-time FTE who does not receive full benefits is added to this scenario.

- Administrative: Includes training and education and office supplies.
- Supplies and other: Includes supplies utilized for conducting autopsies and related expenses including histology, x-rays, software, waste disposal, equipment, supplies, and insurance.
- Livery: Includes wages, benefits, gas, maintenance, insurance, and miscellaneous supplies. Wages are based on round-trip drive time to the most centrally located population center for each county that responded as being interested in utilizing a livery service and are set at \$18 per hour. Gas is based on round-trip mileage to the most centrally located population center.
- Utilities: Based on estimates provided by the Marathon County Facilities and Capital Management Department.

Avoided Expenses

- Outsourcing autopsy: Actual expense to Marathon County based on the volume of autopsies and imaging services needed, assuming 75 outsourced autopsies.
- Travel: Mileage reimbursement expense, assuming 75 outsourced autopsy trips.
- Sheriffs and police department: Elimination of unproductive travel time and travel expenses, based on the process improvement analysis and assuming 75 outsourced autopsy trips.

Debt Payment

- A schedule of estimated debt service was prepared assuming tax exempt general obligation (GO) bonds with a 20-year amortization period, 4.0% average interest rate, costs of issuance of \$260,000, and the high-end cost of construction (\$10,377,700), which resulted in an average annual debt payment estimated to be \$776,700.
- The specific interest rate that will be applicable to any borrowing conducted will be based on the desirability of the bonds on the public market and whether the specific borrowing would be eligible for tax exempt status.

Sensitivity Analysis

As a sensitivity analysis, a financial projection was prepared to estimate the impact to cash flow under a scenario where the Forensic Science Center had no pathologists on staff. For this scenario, it was assumed no autopsies would be performed and, therefore, all related revenue was removed from the financial projection. Remaining revenue relates to tissue procurement for activity occurring in Marathon County and generated from tissue recovery organizations.

Expenses removed from the projection include pathologist salaries and benefits, supply expenses related to conducting autopsies, and livery expenses related to services provided to other counties. Remaining expenses include salaries and benefits for all non-pathologist employees, administrative and other general day-to-day supply expenses, livery expenses related to tissue procurement, utilities, and debt.

The sensitivity analysis resulted in the following financial projections:

- Earnings (losses) before depreciation and interest: Low-volume scenario – \$(53,300) or \$(4,400) per month; mid-volume scenario – \$(42,500) or \$(3,500) per month; high-volume scenario – \$(147,300) or \$(12,300) per month.
- Net increase (decrease) in cash: Low-volume scenario – \$(830,000) or \$(69,200) per month; mid-volume scenario – \$(819,200) or \$(68,300) per month; high-volume scenario – \$(924,000) or \$(77,000) per month.

Conclusion

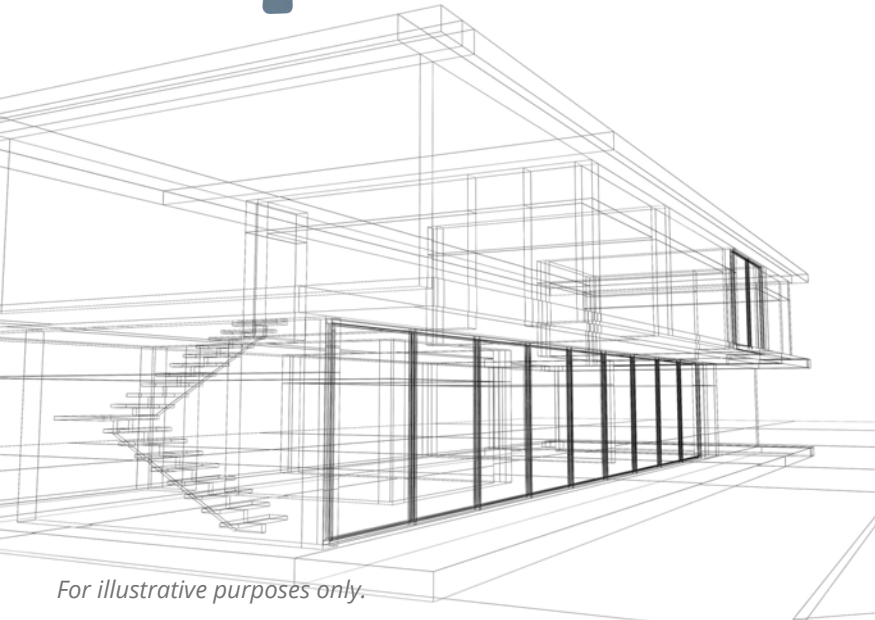
The Medical Examiner's Office has carefully considered the viability of the Forensic Science Center project, including challenges relating to the current system of outsourcing autopsies; local and regional needs; the estimated demand for pathology services; opportunities to expand operations, partnerships, management, and organization of the Forensic Science Center; the positive impacts to Marathon County and other regional counties; financial implications; and other key factors such as pandemics, population growth, and the opioid epidemic.

The Forensic Science Center has the opportunity to become a highly respected pathology provider by significantly improving the quality of the death investigation process in Marathon County and northern Wisconsin regional counties. The Forensic Science Center is also posed to become a valuable partner to regional health systems and tissue procurement organizations. Ultimately, the Forensic Science Center will become a valuable addition to Marathon County, the region, and the entire State of Wisconsin for many years to come.



REGIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCE CENTER

Project Overview



For illustrative purposes only.

Current Challenges

Coroners and Medical Examiners across the State of Wisconsin are confronting a number of industry-wide challenges, including a nationwide shortage of forensic pathologists. In Central Wisconsin, these challenges are exacerbated by the lack of any local providers, as all forensic pathology providers are located in southern and southeastern Wisconsin. Furthermore, the existing providers are faced with overwhelming caseloads

Other challenges affecting the Central Wisconsin region include:

- delayed autopsies and reporting
- lengthy transportation and the related cost
- travel burden on law enforcement
- lack of refrigeration
- unpreparedness for mass casualties
- prosecutorial delays and poor family experience

Traveling for autopsies is taxing on resources.

Based on 75 autopsies conducted annually, projected savings for the Medical Examiner's Office are:

690

unproductive staff
hours eliminated

\$47,500

saved annually in unproductive wages,
travel and outsourcing expenses.

Project Summary

Since 2017, Marathon County's Regional Morgue Task Force has been exploring the viability of a Regional Forensic Science Center (RFSC) focused on enhancing the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of death investigations in Central and Northern Wisconsin. In addition to forensic pathology services, the Forensic Science Center will focus on education by offering training and continuing education opportunities to coroners and medical examiners, law enforcement, district attorney offices, emergency medical and health service providers, and other related organizations.

The Regional Forensic Science Center

The Forensic Science Center will improve the quality of the death investigation process for counties in Central and Northern Wisconsin, and enhance educational opportunities through the delivery of the following services:

- Forensic & Medical autopsies
- Livery service
- Decedent refrigerated storage
- Space for tissue procurement
- Expert forensic testimony
- Forensic consultation
- Education
- Regional mass fatality preparedness
- Assistance with medical research



REGIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCE CENTER

Project Overview

Why Marathon County?

Marathon County is known for offering enhanced professional services to its residents. Expanding the current Medical Examiner's Office to include the Forensic Science Center will offer another premier service to the citizens of Marathon County and help it to be considered a regional asset. Marathon County has many other amenities that makes a Regional Forensic Science Center a natural fit, including:

- Strategically located at the intersection of Highways 51 and 29 in Central Wisconsin
- Location of the Northern Office of the WI Crime Lab
- Department of Criminal Investigation Satellite Office
- Largest County in the region
- Largest Medical Examiner's Office in the region
- Medical College of Wisconsin
- Numerous colleges and universities

By the Numbers

\$10.6 mil

total project cost

17,478 sq. ft.

size of facility

\$150,000

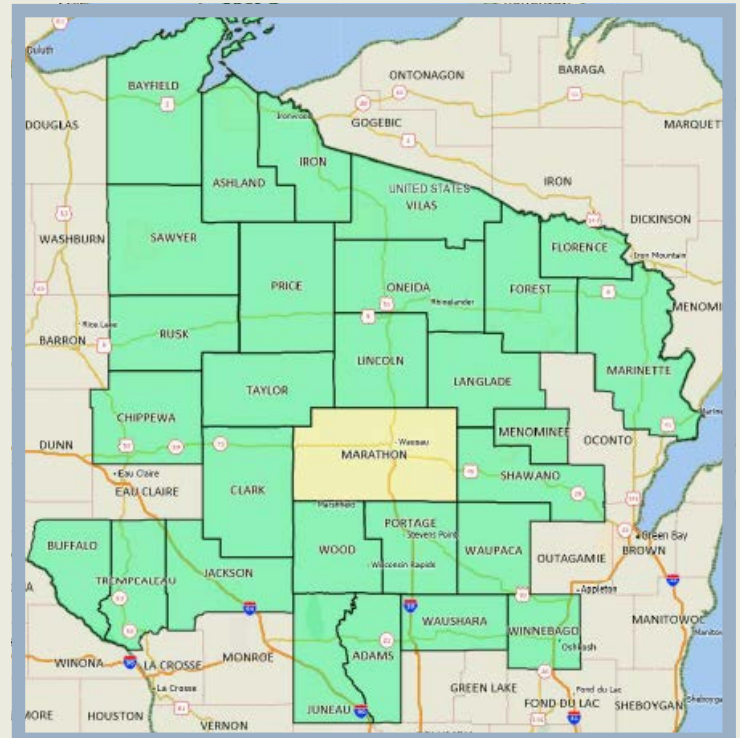
value of building site donated
in-kind by Northcentral
Technical College.

Regional Interest

Regional partners complete over 450 autopsies per year, with a desire to complete even more if there was a local provider. Additionally, counties that have expressed interest to utilize the autopsy services as a secondary provider complete approximately 150 autopsies per year.

Other regional benefits include:

- Improved service to families and community
- Faster release of decedents to funeral home
- Reduction in travel expenses and overtime wages
- Ability to perform more autopsies due to increased availability
- Improved death investigation services
- Regional mass fatality preparedness
- Forensic consultations available to local law enforcement agencies
- Enhanced educational opportunities
- Enhanced preventative services



REGIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCE CENTER

Stakeholder Summary



**Marathon County
Government**

- **Role:** responsible for all day-to-day operations of the Regional Forensic Science Center (e.g., death investigation, autopsies, livery services, consultation with stakeholders, coordination with educational and other stakeholders)
- Benefits Marathon County government receives from a Regional Forensic Science Center:
 - Improved law enforcement experience (less travel, enhanced training)
 - Improved prosecution experience (training, consultation)
 - Improved mass fatality preparedness and response
 - Improved care to families of decedents (trauma-informed)

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT



**Northcentral
Technical College
(NTC)**

- **Role:** Provide long-term lease of land for facility and responsible for general building and grounds maintenance of the Regional Forensic Science Center and educational/certification/licensure opportunities to forensic science center staff.
- Benefits NTC would receive from Regional Forensic Science Center:
 - Opportunity to create multiple new degree programs in medical forensic science with best-in-class autopsy education
 - Enhanced educational opportunities for existing degree programs (nursing, etc.)

EDUCATION



**Medical College of
Wisconsin (MCW)**

- **Role:** Provide educational/certification/licensure opportunities to forensic science center staff and enhance the availability forensic pathologists.
- Benefits MCW would receive from Regional Forensic Science Center:
 - Opportunity to provide medical students with best-in-class autopsy education
 - Opportunity to partner with Marathon County staff to deliver enhanced educational opportunities and career-pathway education for existing degree programs within other academic institutions (NTC, UWSP-Wausau)



**Health Care
Systems**

- **Role:** Provide histology slide processing, lab services, physician specialist consultation, and physician management and recruitment support as requested.
- Benefits systems would receive from Regional Forensic Science Center:
 - Greater access to medical autopsies
 - Forensic consultation
 - Improved medical research opportunities
 - Improved learning opportunities which will enhance care to patients
 - Enhanced decedent storage

HEALTH CARE



**Tissue Procurement
Organizations**

- **Role:** Lease space from Marathon County within the Forensic Science Center to provide tissue procurement services to enhance medical service delivery.
- Benefits Tissue Procurement Organizations would receive from Regional Forensic Science Center:
 - Centralized, regional site for tissue procurement
 - Improved decedent qualification resulting in an increase in tissue procurement
 - Enhanced coordination relative to the scheduling and conducting of autopsies to enhance procurement

TISSUE
PROCUREMENT

Counties throughout Northern Wisconsin and Upper Michigan will also receive immense benefits in the form of reduced travel time and staffing costs for Medical Examiners, Law Enforcement, and District Attorney's Offices, in addition to improved training and consultation services.



Marathon County Regional Forensic Science Center Letters of Support

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MCW-Central Wisconsin
1900 Westwood Drive
Suite 3100
Wausau, WI 54401



715.870.0900
askMCWCW@mcw.edu
Follow us on Facebook @mcw.cw.edu

November 5, 2021

Marathon County Board of Supervisors
500 Forest Street
Wausau, WI 54403

Re: Marathon County Forensic Science Center

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing in support of funding for the Marathon County Forensic Science Center. I am the Sentry and Founding Dean for the Medical College of Wisconsin Central Wisconsin campus in Wausau. The purpose of the MCW-Central Wisconsin campus is to improve the health of north central Wisconsin through education of the physician workforce needed in northern communities. In building the campus here, we rely heavily on the medical resources in the region for assistance with the education of our students. One of the resources that has been unavailable locally for our students is pathology education, and specifically experience with forensic pathology and autopsy. Ideally, all students would have this experience as a foundational part of their education, but due to the travel involved a very limited number of students are able to access this educational experience in Milwaukee. An important part of the development of this Center will be educational space that will allow lectures and training for the medical students and other learners from EMS, law enforcement and health care agencies. These are currently services and teaching opportunities that are extremely hard to come by.

I was extremely pleased in 2017 to join the efforts to bring a forensic science center to Central Wisconsin, as these important services are lacking in northern Wisconsin. In addition to being an important part of medical education for the region's future physicians, there are many other benefits to the community to consider. The absence of this Center results in long delays in the availability of both forensic and non-forensic autopsy, which can be very difficult for families who have experienced the loss of a loved one and utilizes a disproportionate number of services from law enforcement and emergency services in the transportation of bodies to and from jurisdictions where autopsy services are available.

The Marathon County Forensic Science Center will serve several northern and central Wisconsin Counties that are similarly disadvantaged in accessing these services. This will provide additional revenue to the center, while increasing quality and convenience and lowering costs. The Marathon County Forensic Science Center will also be a key resource in preparedness and provide critical services in the event of disaster or pandemic. Expertise in preparedness and

morgue services such as safe body storage are currently lacking in the region. This may be of critical importance to public safety during an emergency.

I strongly encourage you to consider funding for the Marathon County Forensic Science Center. The Center is needed for educational and medical support services, will enhance public safety, and save time and other valuable resources for EMS and law enforcement. The benefit of the Center to the community and region is clear. They have my strongest support. Please contact me if I can provide any additional information. Thank you for your consideration of this important endeavor.

With warmest regards,



Lisa Grill Dodson, MD
Professor, Department of Family and Community Medicine
Sentry and Founding Campus Dean,
Medical College of Wisconsin-Central Wisconsin
ldodson@mcw.edu
Direct line 715.870.0919

LEARN. LIVE. CARE. CURE

Richard S. Vander Heide MD, Ph.D.
Service Line Medical Director of Pathology and Lab
Marshfield Clinic Health System
Marshfield, WI 54449

November 10, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in strong support of the proposed Marathon County Forensic Science Center. I am certain the forensic center would provide benefits for the entire Central Wisconsin area by providing proper death investigation and storage for potential mass casualty events and/or from pandemic-related deaths. Moreover, the facility would directly benefit Marshfield Clinic and the Marshfield Clinic Research Institute in the areas of education and research. I would like to expand on these potential benefits.

It is important to have a forensic pathologist available for the proper investigation of any death that occurs under non-natural circumstances including motor vehicle/ATV/motorcycle/bicycle trauma, suicide, homicide, drowning, accidents, drug overdoses, and unexplained deaths or deaths occurring outside the care of a healthcare professional. It is important that non-natural deaths be properly investigated for the benefit of the family of the deceased, as well as for providing independent expert opinion in the case of any legal ramifications. It would also provide a place for independent investigation of potential therapeutic misadventures or in-hospital deaths for surrounding health care facilities including but not limited to hospitals.

A forensic science center would also yield a potentially important educational institution for the Central Wisconsin area. I have been an autopsy pathologist since I started my practice of Pathology at Wayne State University Medical School in 1994. I have witnessed the potential educational benefits of similar forensic facilities. While at Wayne State University, I served as Residency Program Director. During my tenure, we established a working relationship with the Wayne County Medical Examiner's Office where our residents did rotations to learn the basics of forensic pathology. Prior to moving to Marshfield, I served as Chair of Pathology at LSU in Orleans Parish, Louisiana where a coroner system was utilized for forensic autopsies. We had a similar relationship with the Orleans Parish Coroner's office to train our residents in forensic pathology. In addition to training pathology residents and fellows, a forensic science center could also be used to educate other healthcare providers, as well as provide a unique

experience for local and regional junior high/high school students and university students majoring in sciences who may be considering a career in the health care field.

There is a large potential benefit for both internal and externally funded research projects resulting from cooperation between the Forensic Science Center and the Marshfield Clinic Research Institute. While in New Orleans, I was part of a multicenter NIH funded grant to study the genomics and proteomics of early atherosclerosis. The grant has been funded over eight years and is still operating, resulting in new findings and publications in national and international journals. Our role was to provide vascular tissue to the group. We established a relationship with the Jefferson Parish Coroner's office to obtain tissue from young (age 18-55) decedents who died without any previous history of cardiovascular disease. This is just one example of the potential research projects; Marshfield Clinic has many investigators in the areas of cancer, cancer epidemiology, infectious disease/COVID (to mention a few) that could benefit from access to a regional forensic science center.

In summary, there are many immediate and long-term potential benefits from establishing the Marathon County Forensic Science Center. I strongly encourage the facility be established. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Richard S. Vander Heide

Richard S. Vander Heide (Nov 11, 2021 16:02 CST)

Richard S. Vander Heide MD, Ph.D.





August 1, 2018

Jessica Blahnik
Marathon County Medical Examiner
500 Forest Street
Wausau, WI 54403-5554

Dear Jessica Blahnik:

Aspirus Wausau Hospital (AWH) would like to affirm our support for the Marathon County Regional Morgue project. Due to lessons learned from past incidents with mass casualties that have occurred in our community, we agree this project would help fill those needs along with multiple gaps related to a fatality surge due to a highly infectious disease. AWH met with our pathology administrator to discuss this project and was made aware of how this project could also address other significant gaps related to forensic pathology and autopsy resources in the Central/North Central Wisconsin region; this discussion provided further support of this project.

Additionally, the Marathon County Regional Morgue would be advantageous to many of our other partners in the region, including but not limited to: hospitals, public health, emergency management, emergency medical services, law enforcement, district attorneys and mortuary services. AWH sees benefit with this project coming to fruition in our community as it will have added benefit to the region, as well as the entire state, as a measure to contend with the need for mass fatality capabilities and have a central repository for decedents from highly infectious diseases.

Sincerely,

Tonya L. Darner, MBA
Vice President of Operational and Clinical Services
Aspirus Wausau Hospital



North Central Wisconsin
Healthcare Emergency Readiness Coalition

NCW HERC

www.ncw-herc.org

November 10, 2021

Marathon Medical Examiner
Attn: Jessica Blahnik
1308 West St
Wausau, WI 54401

To the Marathon County Board:

The North Central Wisconsin Healthcare Emergency Readiness Coalition (NCW HERC) Board has been in support of the "Marathon County Regional Forensic Science Center" project, since becoming aware of it in January 2018. NCW HERC has collaborated with the Marathon County Medical Examiner's Office to help close gaps known in regional ability to respond to mass fatality events and provide ante/post-mortem services in Wisconsin.

The COVID pandemic has further outlined the need for a quality mortuary system to support the medical demands of a surge in death. The Marathon County Medical Examiner's Office has served as a medical hub, not only seeing the highest volume of decedents in the NCW HERC region, related to COVID-19, but aided in supporting, processing and managing deaths in the region throughout the pandemic, with limited resources. Throughout the COVID pandemic, the regional health care systems and funeral homes were taxed with the increased deaths and turned to the Medical Examiner's Office for assistance and surge planning. There were a few times when the mortuary systems were beyond capacity and needed additional support that could have been managed more efficiently with a Regional Forensic Science Center. Jessica and her team have served as leaders among peers, providing technical support, best practice, and guidance throughout the COVID pandemic.

The NCW HERC Board is extremely grateful to have a quality member like the Marathon County Medical Examiner's Office. Jessica and her team have done a tremendous job supporting the NCW HERC region before and during the COVID pandemic. They remain a key contact for support, information, and situational awareness related to best practices in the mortuary system. By expanding the Medical Examiner's Office, the region would be better equipped to handle a mass fatality event or increased deaths from a pandemic.

The NCW HERC Board would highly recommend and be in support of any expansion or opportunities of improvement that could be developed to aid Marathon County in improving mortuary services in North Central Wisconsin.

Respectfully,
DocuSigned by:

Delmond Horn

AFFE7058CF3A40A...

Delmond Horn
NCW HERC Chair

DocuSigned by:

Joshua England

863E023FBEB948E...

Josh England
NCW HERC Vice Chair

PO Box 871 Rhinelander, WI 54501
Herc.coordinator@ncw-herc.org
(715)360-6822



SCOTT R. PARKS
SHERIFF

MARATHON COUNTY
500 FOREST STREET

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
WAUSAU, WISCONSIN 54403-5568

NON-EMERGENCY
(715) 261-1200
FAX (715) 261-1221
www.marathoncountysheriff.org



November 5, 2021

Marathon County Board Of Supervisors:

Discussion continues in determining the need for a morgue facility in Marathon County. The Medical Examiner's Office working in conjunction with a Forensic Pathologist performs autopsies to determine cause and the manner of a death. Sometimes the cause of death can be easily identified, but many times there are more complicated issues requiring the assistance of toxicology tests, historical examinations of records and other studies. It is essential the medical examiner, forensic pathologist, and local law enforcement work closely to determine the reason for a person's death.

Currently, Marathon County is required to utilize forensic pathologists from outside the area causing detectives, medical examiner, and deceased body to travel, sometimes more than two hours one way, to conduct a forensic autopsy. The investigative actions that occur in the first twenty four hours of a person's death are key factors in determining the solvability of a criminal investigation. Tasking a detective team to accompany a deceased person traveling hours to conduct an autopsy is detrimental to the need for real time follow up criminal investigation at the scene and elsewhere. Having a morgue with forensic pathology capabilities in Marathon County would be beneficial to law enforcement and the criminal justice system. There could be occasions where a trained pathologist would be able to respond directly to criminal investigation scenes building a stronger case for the prosecution to present to the criminal justice system.

In addition to the medical examiner and forensic pathologist conducting work at the morgue completing autopsies, there could be an opportunity for the pathologist to provide localized training to area law enforcement and other emergency services. There may be an opportunity to perform public service education to the various agencies and organizations that work directly and indirectly with the local morgue. Another key factor would be the local pathologist would be able to provide skilled testimony in court cases without having to summons persons from outside the area, who are not always able to attend in a timely fashion. The direct access relationship between the District Attorney and local pathologist would be beneficial in presenting and moving court cases forward.

Besides the morgue and the forensic pathologist being used by local law enforcement, there would be a potential for other law enforcement agencies and emergency services in central and northern Wisconsin who would seek to use the Marathon County facility rather than travel further south for the same forensic pathology capabilities. This could be a potential revenue source for Marathon County.

A majority of what has been depicted in this letter revolves around the criminal investigation aspects of a person's demise. Family members are impacted by the death of a loved one. Delays in providing a family answers or being able to release a decedent's body only cause additional burdens to already overwhelmed grieving family. A localized morgue could aid in reducing the delays in the release of the decedent's body.

Another aspect which would be beneficial to central and northern Wisconsin would be the advancement of legislation which is beneficial to the needs of this third of the State. A majority of the legislation adopted revolves around the lower third of the State, which can be applicable to this area, but does not always take into consideration the differences in population bases, actions occurring locally requiring morgue or forensic pathologist capabilities, and more. A local morgue with an attached forensic pathologist could aid this third of the State in facilitating practices that pertain to the safety and well-being of our citizens and provide for the needs of local emergency services as a whole.

In closing, I support the actions of our Medical Examiner as she directs her efforts toward depicting the need and usage of a localized morgue in Marathon County with a forensic pathologist as part of the team. The convenience factor, along with the easy accessibility to a local pathologist's expertise, including the potential to enhance emergency service personnel skills through training programs makes this an easy decision to support. That decision is augmented when one considers the availability of localized trauma informed response to families already suffering from the death of a loved one and needing/seeking immediate answers. Please continue exploring this and moving it toward reality.

Sincerely;

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott R Parks". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Scott R Parks

Marathon County Sheriff



Langlade County Sheriff's Office

840 Clermont Street, Antigo, WI 54409-1947

Phone: (715) 627-6411 Fax: (715) 627-6433

Website: www.co.langlade.wi.us

Mark B. Westen
Sheriff

Daniel P Bauknecht
Chief Deputy

November 9, 2021

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter of support for the Regional Forensic Science Center project. I have participated on the Marathon County Regional Morgue Task Force for several years and have seen significant progress towards the goal of offering an additional facility in the State of Wisconsin that is capable of conducting forensic autopsies for criminal cases.

Currently there are only a very select few options in Wisconsin for law enforcement agencies to have these autopsies completed for criminal cases. All of which are currently in the far southern portion of the state. I've spoken to several law enforcement Chiefs and Sheriff's throughout the state and especially those in northern Wisconsin. There is definitely a need and law enforcement in the northern tier of the state would benefit a great deal with cost associated with these critical investigative procedures. Travel time (which commonly can exceed 3-4 hours) and overall lack of available facilities are the two common hurdles which many agencies must navigate when an investigation requiring a forensic autopsy is needed.

Please consider this letter of support for the Regional Forensic Science Center project in Marathon County WI. As a bordering county to Marathon County, which is conveniently located in the north central region of the state, many agencies, including our office, would benefit from this facility in the future.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark B. Westen'.

Sheriff Mark B. Westen
Langlade County Sheriff's Office

CHERYL BREHMER
Coroner



Winnebago County
Coroner

112 Otter Ave.
Oshkosh, WI 54901

Oshkosh (920) 232-3300
Fax (920) 424-7524

e-mail: cbrehmer@co.winnebago.wi.us

November 9, 2021

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter in support of the Regional Forensic Center project that has been proposed by Marathon County.

In the State of Wisconsin, county Coroners and Medical Examiners have limited resources when contracting for forensic pathology services. This center would greatly benefit our counties in not only in the northern regions but, those in central or southern Wisconsin as well.

Though Winnebago County does have access to resources through the Fond Du Lac County Medical Examiner's Office which is a neighboring county, they are overwhelmed with only one pathologist and there are times that we could wait several days to over a week before an autopsy can be completed. Additionally, should the pathologist take vacation, we could be waiting several weeks. This means that the investigation may be stalled but, more importantly, families are unable to move forward with funeral services for their loved ones.

The benefits of this Center are numerous and far reaching and the importance of this resource is greater than I could possibly explain.

On behalf of the families, law enforcement agencies, and the Winnebago County Coroner's Office please take this project under serious consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cheryl Brehmer".

Cheryl Brehmer
Winnebago County Coroner



OFFICE OF MEDICAL EXAMINER • PORTAGE COUNTY, WISCONSIN

SCOTT RIFLEMAN
Chief Medical Examiner

1500 STRONGS AVE., STEVENS POINT, WI 54481 * PHONE: 715-346-1449 * FAX: 715-346-1666

HEATHER SCHULTZ
Chief Deputy Medical Examiner

November 5, 2021

Jessica Blahnik, Chief Medical Examiner
Marathon County Medical Examiner's Department
1308 West St.
Wausau, WI. 54401

Jessica,

Please accept this letter in total support of your efforts to develop a regional forensic science center and morgue in Marathon County.

Portage County has been actively involved in assisting and supporting the concept and development of this facility for at least the past five years. We saw a great need for such a facility in our area for many reasons.

Of greatest concern in the state now is the lack of forensic pathologists and the distance from central Wisconsin to utilize their services at their facilities. Portage Counties number of death investigations and the need for forensic services has skyrocketed in the past 10 years. It has become not only time consuming but cost prohibitive to autopsy cases with medical/legal concerns and in some cases, we must defer doing autopsies. Also, the existing forensic pathologists are turning down cases due to availability. In addition, the need for a regional morgue for local services such as exam and storage/refrigeration facilities, donation services and additional office and administrative space.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance in contacting or further promoting your project. We need this facility and forensics badly.

Scott Rifelman, Chief Medical Examiner
Portage County, WI.



STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

JOSH KAUL
ATTORNEY GENERAL

Division of Forensic Sciences
State Crime Laboratory—Wausau
7100 Stewart Avenue
Wausau, WI 54401-8410
(715) 845-8626
Fax (715) 848-5833

November 12, 2021

Marathon County Medical Examiner
1308 West Street
Wausau, WI 54401

Dear Medical Examiner Jessica Blahnik,

It is my pleasure to write a letter of support for the Marathon County Regional Forensic Science Center.

The new facility, staffed with Forensic Pathologists, would be a tremendous asset to the Law Enforcement agencies and citizens of Central and Northern Wisconsin. Having this added resource in Central Wisconsin would help reduce travel time to autopsy facilities and aid in providing timely answers to the families of victims.

The Division of Forensic Sciences has a Crime Laboratory located in Wausau. The addition of the Marathon County Regional Forensic Science Center would offer more opportunities for laboratory personnel to provide assistance in evidence documentation and collection during autopsies of homicide victims, upon request. Law Enforcement agencies would also be able to conveniently travel to our region for autopsy services and in person evidence submissions to the Crime Laboratory.

I fully support your initiative in seeking funding through the Neighborhood Investment Fund Program. I am looking forward to the opportunities this will bring to our region.

Sincerely,

Katie Hoffmeyer
Laboratory Director - Wausau



Shawano County Coroner's Office

Brian Westfahl • Shawano County Coroner
311 N. Main Street
Shawano Wisconsin 54166
Phone: 715.526.9533
brian.westfahl@co.shawano.wi.us

November 8, 2021

Ms. Jessica Blahnik
Marathon County Medical Examiner
1308 West Street
Wausau, WI 54401

Re: Marathon County Regional Forensic Science Center Project

Dear Ms. Blahnik:

I am Brian Westfahl, Coroner of Shawano County, and I am writing this letter in support of a Regional Forensic Science Center in Marathon County.

Shawano County presently uses the facilities located in either Fond du Lac, Milwaukee or Madison. The travel time to these facilities one way is between 1 ½ hours to 3 hours depending on which facility is available when needed. Our autopsies are up in the county due to an increase of drug overdoses over the past several years. At one point our county, as a last resort, was forced to go to St. Paul for an autopsy or wait an additional 10 days to have it done at one of our current facilities because they too were experiencing heavy caseloads. As a smaller county we do our own autopsy transports to save money rather than hiring a livery service for transportation. By having to go long distances it not only adds additional expenses to our tax payers but puts an additional strain on our staff having to drive such a distance. Presently, we have no facility nearby for autopsies in the North Central/Eastern part of Wisconsin. This new proposed facility in Marathon County would be a great addition and not only help our county but many in the surrounding area who need services similar to ours.

In closing I would hope that all individuals involved with this project fully support it and would find it beneficial to add a Regional Forensic Science Center in Marathon County. Feel free to call me if you have any questions regarding my support for this project.

Sincerely,

Brian Westfahl, Shawano County Coroner



DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

James A. Davel • Shawano County Administrative Coordinator

Shawano County Courthouse, 311 N. Main Street, Room 109, Shawano, Wisconsin 54166
Phone: 715-524-4611 • Fax: 715-524-5076

November 8, 2021

Ms. Jessica Blahnik
Marathon County Medical Examiner
1308 West Street
Wausau, WI 54401

Re: Marathon County Regional Forensic Science Center Project

Dear Ms Blahnik:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Shawano County regarding our support for the Marathon County Regional Forensic Science Center Project. This would be a considerable benefit for our community, and we strongly support the project.

Shawano County thanks all involved in this project and hopes it receives the support that it deserves. The regional aspect of this project alone is huge and for a small county the benefit tremendous.

Sincerely,

James A. Davel
Administrative Coordinator
Shawano County



SHAWANO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Adam C. Bieber



George Lenzner
Chief Deputy

Dylan Berg
Jail Administrator

November 9, 2021

Jessica Blahnik
Marathon County Medical Examiner
1308 West Street
Wausau WI 54401

RE: Marathon County Regional Forensic Science Center Project

Dear Ms. Blahnik,

I would like to express my support of a Regional Forensic Science Center in Marathon County.

Shawano County currently uses facilities in Fond du Lac, Milwaukee, or Madison to perform autopsy services. The locations of these facilities require additional officer time and additional costs to each investigation that requires a medical examiner. The current facilities are overloaded and scheduling has become difficult. Other facility options are even further from our county and would create more of a burden on Shawano County and the tax payers who live here.

I would ask that there be heavy consideration for this project in order to maintain the integrity of our investigations and provide a timely resolve for the public. Shawano County is one county of many that would benefit from a new forensic science center in Marathon County. I would like to support this project to provide medical examiner services for our area. If you have any questions on this matter please do not hesitate to call. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Adam Bieber
Shawano County Sheriff's Office



City of Shawano Police Department

Bradley J. Rabideau, Chief of Police
125 S Sawyer Street, Shawano, WI 54166
Phone: 715-524-4545 Fax: 715-524-2786
www.cityofshawano.com

Ms. Jessica Blahnik
Marathon County Medical Examiner
1308 West Street
Wausau, WI , 54401

Re: Marathon County Regional Forensic Science Center Project

Dear Ms. Blahnik,

I want to take the opportunity show support for a Regional Forensic Science Center in Marathon County.

As you are aware currently there is no facility available for autopsies in our general region. The city of Shawano is no different than many communities in that we are seeing an increased need for autopsies due to the opioid epidemic.

This increased need for autopsies and the fact that the exams need to be completed in Milwaukee or St. Paul, MN. drains resources.

Having a more centrally located regional resource available means departments will need to spend less time in transit. It means spending less resources getting autopsies completed and more time and other resources in our community working towards our departments mission of serving and protecting.

Having a regional forensic center also lessens the workload of medical examiners in Milwaukee and elsewhere.

More resources centrally located benefits everyone. I and the Shawano police department understand the need and support the initiative to create a regional forensic center.

Sincerely,

Bradley J. Rabideau

*Clark County Coroner
Richard J Schleifer D-ABMDI
Chief Deputy Butch Carl Deputy Clarissa Rochester
317 Sunset Place Neillsville, WI 54456
Phone 715-797-1048*

November 9, 2021

Jessica Blahnik RN, MSN, ABMDI

Jessica

Being a neighbor County and working with John and yourself feel that as the Coroner for Clark Co over 20 years have had a good working relationship.

When I was first approached about Wausau having a Forensic Autopsy facility established several years ago I then expressed my support and continue hundred percent in support.

This project is long overdue for people in Central Wisconsin and Counties surrounding Marathon. As Clark Co. Has had to use either Madison or Cites an continue as we have no choice. We used to take all Medical Autopsy's to Eau Claire however since Covid-19 they stopped and no longer have this Service available and all autopsy's must be taken to above mentioned.

We are about one hour away from Wausau and strongly recommend to Marathon Co, Board and others concerned

this project to move forward to accomplish a site in Wausau.

With budget Money always tight a County like ours Clark and surrounding Counties could save Money.

When you calculate transportation to Cities or Madison Time involved and cost. When you are a little more then Hr away from a facility in Wausau it amounts to several Dollars.

Thank You

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard J. Schleifer".

Richard J Schleifer D-ABMDI Coroner



Wood County

WISCONSIN

OFFICE OF CORONER

David A. Patton

November 9, 2021

Jessica Blahnik, Chief Medical Examiner
Marathon County Medical Examiner's Office
1308 West St.
Wausau, WI 54401

Jessica,

Please accept this letter in support of your and your offices efforts in the planning and development of a regional forensic science center and morgue here in Central Wisconsin.

Two of the biggest challenges that face Wood County with respect to autopsies is distance and ability to get them done. It currently takes about eight hours to make to full round trip for an autopsy. Having a facility here in Central Wisconsin would cut that down to about three hours. This would be a huge savings to Wood County in both wages and mileage.

Second, the current pathologist that we currently utilize, while good, has greatly reduced the number of autopsies he performs and has become more selective in which autopsies he performs. I believe that with a regional forensic science center located in Marathon County, we would be able to perform more autopsies when needed, which would make my local law enforcement agencies extremely happy!

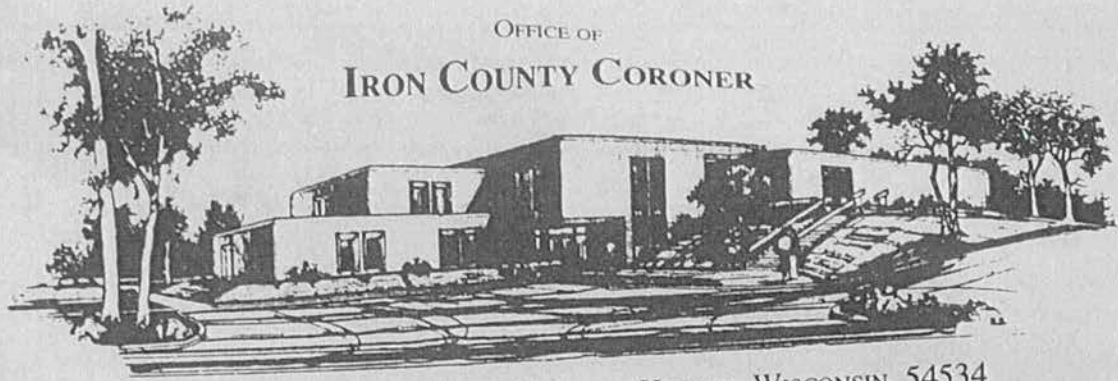
Please let me know if there is anything that I, my staff or local and county agencies can do to assist you in seeing the regional forensic science center become a reality.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Patton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Patton" clearly distinguishable.

David Patton, Coroner
Wood County

OFFICE OF
IRON COUNTY CORONER

DIANE SIMONICH
CORONER



300 TACONITE STREET, SUITE 101

HURLEY, WISCONSIN 54534

Tuesday November 9th, 2021

Dear Jessica,

I am so happy hear the Regional Forensic Science Center project is still on the table for consideration. The location in Marathon County would benefit our county immensely as this would shorten our drive for forensic autopsies and relieve the strain of mass fatality decedent storage. Currently we send our forensic autopsies to UW Madison, which is a great place however, the drive time both ways and the expense associated with transporting decedents to that location can be devastating to our budget. We do not have our own transport vehicles or staff so; we do pay for that service as well! I look forward to the day that these services can be provided closer to home. I commend you and your county board for the forward thinking to achieve this goal!

Thank you for the efforts being put into this very exciting and needed service!

Sincerely,
Diane M. Simonich CRT
Iron County Coroner

OFFICE OF LINCOLN COUNTY CORONER

Office of Lincoln County Coroner
Paul C. Proulx, Coroner
W5444 Taylor Street
Merrill, Wisconsin 54452
Phone 715-526-4260
Cell 715-218-0555
Dispatch 715-536-6272
Fax 715-539-8432
E-mail Pproulx@co.lincoln.wi.us

November 10, 2021

Jessica Blahnik
Marathon County ME

Re: Regional Forensic Science Center

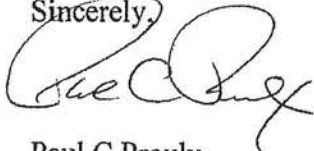
Dear Jessica

In the past we have had the conversation regarding your plans for a regional center for autopsy's. My position has not changed. I firmly support your concept for this plan. For Lincoln County that all day trip to Madison would not be missed. It is expensive in both time and money for us to travel to the UW Hospital.

So I stand with you in support of this project and hope it can be accomplished in a decent amount of time. Please note I have talked with my oversight committee about this project and they also support the plan.

Good luck and please let me know if there is anything else I can do to help.

Sincerely,



Paul C Proulx
Lincoln County Coroner

District Attorney
THERESA WETZSTEON



Deputy District Attorney
ANITA M. LAWRENCE

June 27, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

The purpose of this letter is to express the Marathon County District Attorney's Office's support for the Regional Forensic Science Center and Morgue. Time is of the essence when it comes to the effective investigation into suspicious death cases. The direction of an investigation can turn on the findings of the forensic pathologist at autopsy. Currently, Marathon County law enforcement investigators are forced to allocate critical time and resources to facilitate the secure transport and autopsy of the deceased. Further, the timing of an autopsy is often delayed due to limited resources of the facility and the multiple other counties being serviced by the same facility. In the interim, law enforcement is moving forward with the investigation of a suspicious death without evaluation of the deceased, a critical piece of evidence. As District Attorney, I have many times taken the position that evaluation of further steps in the investigation and prosecution of the matter must be put on hold until the autopsy is complete and the findings are relayed.

Law enforcement and the District Attorney are not the only ones awaiting results of an autopsy, the family and loved ones of the deceased are awaiting the results as well. The delay in performing an autopsy can cause further anxiety and trauma to an already devastated family or loved ones.

In addition to the performance of the autopsy, a Regional Forensic Science Center would also allow seamless coordination in the processing of evidence identified and collected at autopsy with the State Crime Laboratory in Wausau.

The loss of a human life is tragic, the loss of a human life under suspicious circumstances has a wide spread negative impact on our local citizens and most of all the loved ones of the deceased. The delays in these investigations as a result of the lack of a regional morgue are unacceptable. Please accept this letter as a statement of strong support from the Marathon County District Attorney's Office for the Regional Forensic Science and Morgue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "TWA", is written over a horizontal line.

Theresa Wetzsteon
District Attorney
Marathon County, WI

GREG HUBER
JUDGE

P: 715-261-1350
F: 715-261-1319

Becky Schneider
Judicial Assistant



AMANDA LEITZKE

Reporter

P: 715-261-1356

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing this letter in strong support of the proposed Marathon County Forensic Science Center. I have had the distinct pleasure of serving as the Chief Judge of the Ninth Judicial District, comprised of twelve counties throughout northcentral Wisconsin, for nearly six years. Through that service, along with my eighteen years as a Marathon County Circuit Court Judge and my previous career as an Assistant District Attorney, I have witnessed the important role that forensic investigation and professional pathology plays in our justice system.

Many of the most serious disputes that come before courts require the availability of skilled forensic pathology services; however, the current situation through the State of Wisconsin, and particularly in northern Wisconsin, is that the availability of these services is extremely limited. This delays local law enforcement investigations, thus impacting the evaluation of crucial evidence by prosecutors. Important matters are left unresolved for too long and consequently families that are already dealing with difficult circumstances experience further stress. The lack of forensic pathology resources also causes significant challenges when cases enter our criminal and civil justice systems. Large pathology schedules and caseloads leave forensic pathologists with very limited availability to appear in court to testify, further delaying the conclusion of these cases and increasing the trauma experienced by families.

I sincerely appreciate Marathon County's efforts to bring a Forensic Science Center to north central Wisconsin and I respectfully request that you consider allocating significant resources to make this project possible. The entire State of Wisconsin will benefit from this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Huber". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Honorable Greg Huber
Marathon County Circuit Court Judge
Chief Judge of the Ninth Judicial District

