



# MARATHON COUNTY REGIONAL MORGUE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

Monday, August 16, 2021, at 10:30 am-12:00 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	W	
Scott Rifleman	P	
Vicki Resech		X
Mark Westen		X
Greg Zoromski	W	

**Also Present via Web or Phone:** Lance Leonhard Marathon County Administrator, Jessica Blahnik Marathon County ME (in-person), Christina Wimmer Marathon County CDME, Craig Christians Marathon County Facilities (in-person), Jean Maszk County Board, Matt Honold Somerville

1. **Call Meeting to Order**  
The meeting was called to order by Chair McEwen at 10:32 am.
2. **Public Comment** - None
3. **Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports**
  - A. Somerville Architectural Firm
    1. Space needs analysis results
  - B. Location discussion
    1. Aspirus renovation
    2. New construction

**Discussion:**

Matt Honold provided an overview of Somerville's work experience completing the Brown County Medical Examiner's Office new facility. Their facility was roughly 18,000 square feet, whereas Marathon County is projected to be roughly 13,000 square feet; the floor plan is fluid.

Honold explained that the facility requirements would work within the Aspirus Liberty Mutual condo location, however there were numerous limitations and concerns. The space would be an ideal geographical location, which was an advantage. However, there were many concerns with the location that included the first floor was unconditioned parking that caused issues with plumbing and the layout was less flexible, with no room for future growth. There were concerns about exhaust ventilation that would require exterior chases, in addition to Aspirus already having lab equipment on the roof and the new equipment would need clearance zones; there was not a lot of roof space still available. New construction would allow for more flexibility with the facility layout and provide increased security with remote access. Renovation cost per square foot ranged from \$300-\$325/square foot, whereas new construction cost ranged from \$440-\$460/square foot. Honold stated that they came up with these construction numbers by taking the actual cost of the Brown County facility, projected a 5% inflation costs, along with another 10% for contingency costs/pricing.

Craig Christians shared concerns over the Aspirus condo fee structure and the potential to inherit additional costs if Aspirus had determined to tear down an existing building in the complex. The building was built in the 1960's and could potentially require additional upgrades compared to new construction. The unconditioned lower level would make the renovation difficult.

Chair McEwen shared concerns over the condo fees, building age, and accessing the shared loading dock. He stated that the Aspirus condo was not a suitable space for the facility.

**Follow Up:**

None

- C. Pathologist update

**Discussion:**

Blahnik reported a record year for autopsies in Marathon County, with 50 completed, year to date; the previous closest year was 37 autopsies.

Rifleman shared that he has deferred autopsies that he would normally complete due to the pathologist shortage.

**Follow Up:**

None

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

**A. Finalize location (new construction or renovation)**

**Discussion:**

Administrator Leonhard expressed his concerns with the Aspirus condo location. The space provided limited flexibility and inefficiencies due to the site layout. There was also increased risk with the construction costs (if issues arise) and the condo fees being added into the operating budget. Marathon County needs the best location for long-term sustainability.

Bean stated he agrees to keep looking into new construction or a different location/warehouse for renovation.

Rifleman said that he supports new construction if it is financially feasible.

Dr. Dodson stated that her experience being in the Liberty Mutual building space has never been problematic. Marathon County would need to determine the best long-term location for the facility.

Blahnik explained that we had investigated another location provided by Marshfield Clinic; BMO Bank building located by the Marshfield Clinic Wausau Campus and Aspirus Wausau Hospital. It was determined early that the building would not meet the project needs. There are currently no other existing buildings that have been identified for renovation. Blahnik expressed that there will be limitations with renovating an existing space for this type of project and the architectural firm shared that new construction is typically the best route for these types of facilities.

Dr. Clark stated he supports new construction if County Board would support it.

Zoromski stated that he also supports new construction and expressed the need for privacy for this type of facility.

Dr. Dodson inquired about bonding for new construction compared to renovation. Administrator Leonhard explained that the process would be identical for both. However, the condo association portion would be different in the sense that the county could not borrow for the condo fees or routine maintenance, which would be part of the operating budget. Whereas the county could borrow for routine maintenance on a county owned facility.

Chair McEwen wrapped up the discussion by stated that the county will explore properties for new construction.

**Follow Up:**

Explore land options for new construction.

**B. CIP request update**

**Discussion:**

Blahnik explained that the CIP request has been updated to reflect the new construction costs provided by Somerville; the highest figures were used for the request. Blahnik stated that the Public Safety Committee had a project updated at their August 4, 2021, meeting.

**C. Next Steps**

**Discussion:** Blahnik explained that the next steps are to determine the location of the facility.

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

Chair McEwen stated that the next meeting will be after Marathon County identifies a location for the facility.

**6. Announcements**

None

**7. Adjournment**

**MOTION BY RIFLEMAN; SECOND BY BEAN TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 11:30 A.M. MOTION CARRIED.**