

**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA ITEM TRANSMITTAL**

|   |   |  |                      |
|---|---|--|----------------------|
| (1) DEPARTMENT<br>Sheriff - Coroner   | (2) MEETING DATE<br>6/2/2015                | (3) CONTACT/PHONE<br>Ian Parkinson/781-4540  |                      |
| (4) SUBJECT<br>Request for approval of renewal contract with Microcorre Diagnostic laboratory for forensic pathology services, including autopsies and medical inspections, for Fiscal Years 2015-16 and 2016-17 in the amount of \$200,000 annually. |   |  |                      |
| (5) RECOMMENDED ACTION<br>It is recommended that your Board approve and direct the Chairperson to sign a two year contract with Microcorre Diagnostic Laboratory to provide forensic pathology services to the Sheriff-Coroner's Office.              |   |  |                      |
| (6) FUNDING SOURCE(S)<br>General Fund   | (7) CURRENT YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT<br>\$0.00 | (8) ANNUAL FINANCIAL IMPACT<br>\$200,000.00  | (9) BUDGETED?<br>Yes |
| (10) AGENDA PLACEMENT<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing (Time Est. ___) <input type="checkbox"/> Board Business (Time Est. ___)                                   |   |  |                      |
| (11) EXECUTED DOCUMENTS<br><input type="checkbox"/> Resolutions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contracts <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinances <input type="checkbox"/> N/A  |   |  |                      |
| (12) OUTLINE AGREEMENT REQUISITION NUMBER (OAR)<br>19001546   |   | (13) BUDGET ADJUSTMENT REQUIRED?<br>BAR ID Number:<br><input type="checkbox"/> 4/5 Vote Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A |                      |
| (14) LOCATION MAP<br>N/A  | (15) BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT?<br>No       | (16) AGENDA ITEM HISTORY<br><input type="checkbox"/> N/A Date: <u>6/18/2013</u>  |                      |
| (17) ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE REVIEW   |   |  |                      |
| (18) SUPERVISOR DISTRICT(S)<br>All Districts  |   |  |                      |

# County of San Luis Obispo



TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Sheriff - Coroner / Ian Parkinson/781-4540

DATE: 6/2/2015

SUBJECT: Request for approval of renewal contract with Microcorre Diagnostic laboratory for forensic pathology services, including autopsies and medical inspections, for Fiscal Years 2015-16 and 2016-17 in the amount of \$200,000 annually.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that you approve and direct the Chairperson to sign a two year contract with Microcorre Diagnostic Laboratory to provide forensic pathology services to the Sheriff-Coroner's Office.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Sheriff-Coroner has the mandated responsibility to determine the method and manner of certain reportable deaths. Medical procedures must be fulfilled by a forensic pathologist who is specially skilled and licensed to determine the cause of death and interpretation for court proceedings.

In August 2005, Dr. Walker, the previous forensic pathologist, exercised his right to terminate his agreement with the Coroner's Office, resulting in a search for a replacement licensed forensic pathologist certified by the American College of Forensic Examiners. At that time Gary Walter, M.D., doing business as Microcorre Diagnostic Laboratory, was identified as the only licensed forensic pathologist within 150 miles of San Luis Obispo who was willing to accept Coroner pathology contract work. Dr. Walter's primary workload and office is in Tulare. The Sheriff-Coroner's Department and the District Attorney's Office inquired into Dr. Walter's qualifications and reputation and found Dr. Walter very qualified to conduct the required services. A recent review of Dr. Walter's license status determined his licensure is current and in good standing, and for the past nine and a half years he has provided excellent service to the County.

In 2013, an inquiry was made to determine if other suitable forensic pathology services were available locally. The result of this inquiry determined the existence of one pathology group located within San Luis Obispo County; however this group does not provide forensic pathology autopsy services. During previous discussions with this group they indicated they would not agree to provide services which could lead to the need for their testimony in court.

Over time, the number of investigations has fluctuated from 2010 through 2014. In 2010, the Coroner's investigators handled 1,441 reportable deaths which resulted in 281 investigations. Of these cases, 186 required autopsy, 59 required medical inspections and 36 required a review of medical records. In 2011, the Coroner's investigators handled 1,460 reportable deaths which resulted in 276 investigations. Of these cases, 180 required autopsy, 60 required medical inspections, and 36 required a review of medical records. This represents a 1.5% increase in total reportable deaths to the Coroner in 2011 over 2010. The total number of investigations accepted by the Coroner for the same period, decreased by 2%. The number of autopsies performed decreased by about 3%, while the number of medical inspections increased by 1% and the number of medical records reviews remained the same. The total number of deaths reported to the Coroner in 2012 was 1,370 which represented a 6% decrease from 2011.

The following represented increases and decreases in the various categories from 2011 to 2012. 241 cases resulted in investigation, a decrease of 13%, 156 autopsies were performed which resulted in a decrease of 13%, 68 medical inspections were conducted at an increase of 13%, and 17 medical records were reviewed at a decrease of 53%. The

total number of deaths reported to the Coroner in 2013 was 1384, an increase of 1% from 2012.

The following represented increases and decreases in the various categories from 2012 to 2013. 255 cases resulted in investigation (a 6% increase), 166 autopsies were conducted (an increase of 7%), 57 medical inspections were conducted (a decrease of 15%), and 32 medical record reviews were conducted (which represented a 90% increase). The total number of reportable deaths in 2014 was 1391, an increase of .5% from 2013. 124 autopsies conducted in 2014 which represented a decrease of 25% from 2013. In 2014, 74 medical inspections were conducted, representing an increase of 30% compared to 2013. 36 medical records review cases in 2014 showed an increase of 12.5% over 2013. Because the utilization of pathology services was dictated by the circumstances of each individual investigation, the fluctuation in the number of autopsies versus medical inspections, versus medical records reviews, cannot be predicted. The County needs to have this contract in place at the level specified to ensure the fulfillment of these mandated services at a known cost.

| Year | Reportable Deaths | Investigations | Autopsies | Medical Inspections | Records Reviews |
|------|-------------------|----------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 2010 | 1,441             | 281            | 186       | 59                  | 36              |
| 2011 | 1,460             | 276            | 180       | 60                  | 36              |
| 2012 | 1,370             | 241            | 156       | 68                  | 17              |
| 2013 | 1,384             | 255            | 166       | 57                  | 32              |
| 2014 | 1391              | 234            | 124       | 74                  | 36              |

From January 1, 2015 to the present the Coroner's Office has had about the same number of reportable deaths as the same period in 2014. The number of cases which have resulted in investigations have decreased about 13% for the same period of time.

The term of the contract is for two (2) years, beginning July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2017, unless terminated earlier as provided in the terms of the contract. To fulfill the mandated responsibilities of the Coroner's Office, it is requested that the attached two year contract be approved.

**OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT/IMPACT**

County Counsel has reviewed the contract and approves it as to form and legal effect, and the District Attorney's Office concurs with this recommendation.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Under the proposed contract, the County agrees to pay Microcorre \$200,000 annually to perform required autopsies, medical inspections and medical record reviews requested by the Sheriff-Coroner's Office. In prior years the contract with Microcorre limited the number of autopsies and medical inspections that could be performed under the agreement. When that limit was exceeded the Sheriff's Office then paid a premium for each additional procedure. The proposed contract removes this limit. No additional expenditures will be paid to Microcorre beyond the contract amount, regardless of the number of procedures performed.

| Fiscal Year | Contract Amount | Premium Paid | Total Cost |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------|------------|
| 2010-11     | \$195,000       | \$ 900       | \$195,900  |
| 2011-12     | \$200,000       | N/A          | \$200,000  |
| 2012-13     | \$200,000       | N/A          | \$200,000  |
| 2013-14     | \$200,000       | N/A          | \$200,000  |
| 2014-15     | \$200,000       | N/A          | \$200,000  |

Funding for this contract is included in the Sheriff-Coroner's FY 2015-16 proposed budget and, due to the mandated nature of the work, is not at risk from future reduction due to cuts in funding from Federal, State, or local sources.

## **RESULTS**

The contracted forensic pathologist will perform all required autopsies, medical inspections and medical record reviews requested by the Sheriff-Coroner's Office. This represents a lifting of all limits to service in place during the prior contract period, while in essence, extending the prior contract at the same cost. Removal of service limits will ensure that the mandated duties of the Sheriff-Coroner will be met without the risk of increased costs based upon caseload increases which are outside the control of the Coroner.

This contract meets the County's Community-wide Results for a **Safe Community**: "The County will strive to create a community where all people—adults and children alike—have a sense of security and well being, crime is controlled, fire and rescue response is timely, and roads are safe."

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Microcorre Diagnostic Contract