



STATE of CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT of ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES  
and  
OFFICE of the CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER



April 28, 2023

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Napoli, Senator Hwang, Representative Piscopo, and Distinguished Members of the General Obligation Bonding Subcommittee,

We are writing in follow-up to questions received by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and the Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) at the Monday, March 27<sup>th</sup> General Obligation Bonding Subcommittee hearings regarding expansion of the OCME facility on the campus of UCONN Health in Farmington, CT. DAS also received additional questions at the April 25, 2023 Subcommittee hearing, which OCME attended.

First, we would like to provide assurances that our teams are working together to prioritize this project. DAS and OCME have been working together on this project since August 2020, and anticipate that this partnership will remain strong going forward. The OCME has worked closely with the accrediting body and feels optimistic that as long as we continue to demonstrate forward progress on the project, the provisional accreditation will remain intact throughout the course of the design and construction phases.

Next, we wanted to make sure that the legislature is apprised of the anticipated timeline for this project. The events to date are as follows:

- **September 2020 – January 2021** – Preliminary study to understand need and inform the parameters of the project;
- **January 2021 – July 2021** – During the 2021 Session, OCME requested \$2.5M be included in the state budget for the complete project design;
- **July 2021 – December 2021** – After the funding request was included in the budget, a request was made for bond funding to be included on the State Bond Commission Agenda. Funding was allocated in December 2021;
- **January 2022 – December 2022** – RFQ was developed and advertised for project design; Friar Architecture was selected as vendor for project design phase;
- **January 2023 – April 2023** – Contract with Friar Architecture is being finalized and agreement will be submitted to SPRB with expedited review requested.

Once the contract is finalized, we anticipate the timeline will be approximately as follows:

- **August 2023 – April 2025 – Design Phase.** This will be done in three stages to allow DAS and OCME input on the design: (1) Schematic Design (SD); (2) Design Development (DD); and (3) Construction Documents (CDs). Although the design itself takes less than 1-year to develop, additional time is taken between each design phase to review the progress and details of the design against program needs, code compliance, and budget estimates.

- **May 2025 – January 2026 – Competitive Bidding.** During this time period, contract documents will be developed, the estimated project cost will be updated, work will be competitively bid, and there will be an updated Bond Commission request for the remainder of the updated project costs.
- **February 2026 – August 2028 – Construction Phase.** The current site faces several challenges, including being constrained by wetlands and other agencies' land, the complexities of separating office/autopsy/storage spaces, and the need to maintain current operations throughout the construction process.

Please note that the timeline for this project is expected to be lengthy for a variety of reasons, including the fact that the overall process is linear and follows statutory requirements to ensure a fair environment for competitive selections. OCME understands the anticipated length of time required for the design and construction of a complex facility such as this and is working to ensure they can meet the needs of their constituents throughout the duration of the project. Specifically, OCME is considering scheduling changes that would allow them to more flexibly fulfil their duties given current physical plant constraints. OCME also notes that recent statutory changes relating to disposition of unclaimed remains has allowed them to reduce the number of trailers they are using.

One important determination to be made during the design phase is whether the facility will remain at the current location or whether an alternative location would be preferable. There are a number of factors to be considered in making this determination, however under current law, the OCME is prohibited from locating their facility anywhere other than on the campus of a medical school in this state. To provide the most flexibility for the state to make a determination about the best location for the facility during the design phase, we would ask this committee to consider repealing the following bracketed language from C.G.S. sec. 19a-403:

**Sec. 19a-403. (Formerly Sec. 19-527). Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Fees. Regulations.** (a) The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is established to be operated under the control and supervision of the commission. The expenses of the commission and of operating said office shall be paid by the state out of funds appropriated for the purpose. The office shall be directed by a Chief Medical Examiner who shall be appointed by the commission. **[His office shall be located at a medical school in this state.]** The Chief Medical Examiner or any member of the professional staff of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner who is summoned to give expert testimony in a civil action in his capacity as the Chief Medical Examiner or a member of the office shall be allowed and paid a witness fee of five hundred dollars for each day or portion thereof the Chief Medical Examiner or such staff member is required to attend court. Such fee shall be taxed as a part of the costs of the action and be paid by the party requesting the appearance, and any such fee received shall be deposited in the General Fund except no fee shall be imposed if the requesting party is the state.

It is worth noting, if determined preferrable, a new location would extend the project duration as there would need to be a site selection phase followed by adherence to the CEPA review process and new selection of a design professional as a new facility is substantially different from the current project in terms of both budget and scope. Further, the construction budget would substantially increase well beyond the current projections for a comprehensive renovation and addition to the existing facility. The major benefit would be the allowance of a new facility to be constructed without disturbance to the current one.

DAS and OCME have reached out to UCONN to discuss this statutory change and are awaiting their feedback.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and we are happy to provide any additional information you may require.

Sincerely,



Michelle H. Gilman  
Commissioner  
Department of Administrative Services



Dr. James Gill  
Chief Medical Examiner  
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner