



WASHOE COUNTY

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: December 10, 2019

DATE: November 20, 2019

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Patricia Hurley, Director of Human Resources
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THROUGH: Eric Brown, County Manager

SUBJECT: Recommendation to approve an increase in the salary range for the Deputy Chief Medical Examiner job classification (pay grade C0002) and modify pay grade M0003 from a set salary to a salary range for the Chief Medical Examiner/Coroner job classification as reviewed by Korn Ferry (Hay Group) and authorize Human Resources to make the necessary changes. [Net fiscal impact \$55,507] (All Commission Districts.)

SUMMARY

Recommendation to approve an increase to the salary range for the currently unfilled Deputy Chief Medical Examiner classification (pay grade C0002) from \$200,553.60 - \$255,964.80 to \$224,556.80 - \$305,240.00, and modify pay grade M0003 from a set salary of \$283,129.60 to a salary range of \$286,499.20 - \$365,601.60 for the Chief Medical Examiner/Coroner classification. This request is being brought forward to maintain competitiveness in the market to recruit and retain qualified individuals for the highly competitive physician positions in the Medical Examiner/Coroner's Office.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item: Regional Leadership Through Engaged Employees.

PREVIOUS ACTION

On November 13, 2018, the Board approved a salary range increase for the Assistant Medical Examiner job classification (Pay Grade C0001) from \$159,556.80 - \$207,396.80 to \$180,003.20 - \$240,011.20.

On May 13, 2014, the Board approved the creation of a new job classification of Deputy Chief Medical Examiner.

On April 24, 2007, the Board approved the second reading and adoption of an Ordinance amending Washoe County Code, Chapter 35, by adding new sections creating the Office of the Coroner and Medical Examiner (previously known as "Coroner"), and creating new positions of Chief Medical Examiner/Coroner and Assistant Medical Examiner.

AGENDA ITEM # _____

BACKGROUND

When the Chief Medical Examiner/Coroner and Assistant Medical Examiner positions were newly created in 2007, the Hay Group advised these jobs are purely market driven and provided the current market data necessary to create a salary range for the new C0001 pay grade, and a suggested salary amount for the Chief Medical Examiner/Coroner. More than a decade later, we asked Hay to revisit the market data for the Assistant Medical Examiner job title which resulted in an approximate 16% increase to that salary range in 2018.

In 2014, the Board approved the creation of a new Deputy Chief Medical Examiner to assist with the administrative responsibilities of the office in addition to physician duties. Because this position fell between the responsibilities of the Chief Medical Examiner/Coroner and the Assistant Medical Examiner, Human Resources and the Medical Examiner/Coroner's Office simply calculated a pay range between the two.

To ensure competitiveness comparative to the market, the Medical Examiner/Coroner's Office, in conjunction with Human Resources, recently requested that Korn Ferry (Hay Group) evaluate current national market salary ranges for both the Deputy Chief Medical Examiner (currently unfilled) and Chief Medical Examiner/Coroner job classifications. The salary range for the former has never been reviewed by the Hay Group, and the latter has not been reviewed in more than a decade. The results from Hay's evaluation show the County's current salary range of \$200,553.60 - \$255,964.80 is not competitive enough to attract or retain qualified individuals for the Deputy Chief Medical Examiner classification. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the C0002 salary range be increased to \$224,556.80 - \$305,240.00, which is an increase of approximately 19%. The position of Chief Medical Examiner/Coroner has historically been filled via an employment agreement with a set salary. When the current incumbent filled this position, she was hired as a regular County employee with all the rights and benefits thereto, yet no salary range was created at the time. Creating a salary range will provide for consistency with our compensation policies and Washoe County Code, and will allow the incumbent to work through the salary range as any other County employee.

The Deputy Chief Medical Examiner and Chief Medical Examiner/Coroner positions are critical to effectively manage an increasingly demanding caseload which stems from serving all Northern Nevada counties as well as additional counties in Northern California. These positions are very difficult to recruit for based on the highly specialized nature of the work being performed and the extremely limited applicant pool within the field. There is a critical Medical Examiner workforce shortage throughout the U.S., due to increased caseloads related in part to population growth and the opioid/drug-related death epidemic. One estimate indicates there are fewer than 500 qualified candidates in the entire country, many of whom already earn salaries in the high six digits, with average compensation increasing dramatically over the past decade across the nation. It is conservatively estimated that more than 1,200 board-certified forensic pathologists are actually needed currently in the U.S. to meet the workforce demand. Nationally, retirements are anticipated to vastly outpace new additions to the workforce over the next decade. Bringing these salary ranges more in line with the market will allow us to attract and retain the highly skilled and experienced individuals we seek.

FISCAL IMPACT

The additional annual fiscal impact for the modification of the M0003 pay grade for the Chief Medical Examiner/Coroner from a set salary to a salary range is approximately \$55,000 and will be absorbed within the department's existing FY 19/20 budget. There is no immediate fiscal impact to the increase in the C0002 salary range as the department does not currently have a Deputy Chief Medical Examiner position. We are simply establishing the new range now for future recruitment.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation to approve an increase in the salary range for the Deputy Chief Medical Examiner job classification (pay grade C0002) and modify pay grade M0003 from a set salary to a salary range for the Chief Medical Examiner/Coroner job classification as reviewed by Korn Ferry (Hay Group) and authorize Human Resources to make the necessary changes. [Net fiscal impact \$55,507]

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be:

“Move to approve an increase in the salary range for the Deputy Chief Medical Examiner job classification (pay grade C0002) and modify pay grade M0003 from a set salary to a salary range for the Chief Medical Examiner/Coroner job classification as reviewed by Korn Ferry (Hay Group) and authorize Human Resources to make the necessary changes.”