



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

VACANT
First District

JOEL ANDERSON
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

MONICA MONTGOMERY STEPPE
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: April 22, 2025 and May 6, 2025

16

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

NOTICED PUBLIC HEARING:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CODE ARTICLE XX SECTION 364.6, RELATING TO MEDICAL EXAMINER FEES AND CHARGES (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

The San Diego County Department of the Medical Examiner (Medical Examiner) is responsible for investigating and determining the cause and manner of death for all homicides, suicides, accidents, and sudden and/or unexpected deaths according to California Government Code Section 27491 and Health and Safety Code Section 102850.

The Medical Examiner recently conducted a review of all six (6) of its fees and rates to ensure compliance with Board Policy B-29 (Fees, Grants, and Revenue Contracts – Department Responsibility for Cost Recovery), which requires County departments to recover the costs to provide services to agencies or individuals. As a result, the Medical Examiner is proposing to increase five (5) fees and to decrease one (1) fee. The Auditor and Controller reviewed and approved the supporting documentation and methodology used to determine the proposed fees to be adjusted in this proposal for Fiscal Year 2025-26.

Today's action requests that the Board of Supervisors (Board) approve amendments to Article XX of the San Diego County Administrative Code. The Board last approved revisions to the Medical Examiner fees on May 21, 2024 (20), when the Board approved the introduction of an amended ordinance, which included a directive to phase in the fees over two years. Today's request includes two steps, first the ordinance will be introduced on April 22, 2025, then it will be scheduled for consideration and adoption on May 6, 2025. If the proposed ordinance is altered on May 6, 2025, then on that date, a subsequent meeting date will be selected for the ordinance's adoption. A waiver of Board Policy B-29 is also requested as the phased fees will not achieve full cost recovery in the second year of implementation of the five fees proposed for increase.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

On April 22, 2025:

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1. Approve the introduction of the Ordinance (first reading):

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CODE ARTICLE XX SECTION 364.6, RELATING TO MEDICAL EXAMINER FEES AND CHARGES

2. Waive Board Policy B-29, Fees, Grants, and Revenue Contracts – Department Responsibility for Cost Recovery, which requires full cost recovery for services.

If, on April 22, 2025, the Board takes the actions recommended in Item 1 above, then on May 6, 2025:

1. Consider and adopt (unless ordinance is modified on second reading):

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CODE ARTICLE XX SECTION 364.6, RELATING TO MEDICAL EXAMINER FEES AND CHARGES

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The San Diego County Department of the Medical Examiner (Medical Examiner) mission is to contribute to safe communities and to justice and equity for the residents of San Diego County by certifying the cause and manner of death for all homicides, suicides, accidents, and sudden and/or unexpected deaths in the county. The Medical Examiner has and continues to identify ways to reduce departmental costs to provide its services to the public. Fees paid by customers, ensure that Medical Examiner services, which benefit a single agency or individual, do not reduce resources available to the entire region.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed adjustments to the San Diego County Department of Medical Examiner (Medical Examiner) fee structure are a result of the cumulative increase of the cost drivers such as salaries and benefits, services and supplies, and associated departmental and countywide costs. The adjustments to the Medical Examiner fees are based on available expenditure and revenue data and time studies. The proposed actions support the County of San Diego's Strategic Initiative of Sustainability to align the County's available resources with services to maintain fiscal stability and ensure long-term solvency.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact in the current fiscal year. If approved, the revised County of San Diego Department of Medical Examiner (Medical Examiner) fees will be effective July 1, 2025. Related anticipated costs for services and revenue from the fees will be included in the Fiscal Year 2025–27 CAO Recommended Operational Plan for the Medical Examiner. At the Board of Supervisors directive on May 21, 2024, fee increases are being phased in over two years which will result in the Medical Examiner not achieving full cost recovery during that timeframe. For Fiscal Years

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2025–26 and 2026–27, revenue from fees paid by customers is estimated at \$6,500 each year and will not fully cover operating costs for the services provided. The unrecovered estimated costs of \$95 each year will be supported with General Purpose Revenue (GPR) included in the Fiscal Year 2025–27 CAO Recommended Operational Plan for the Medical Examiner. There is no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

The San Diego County Department of the Medical Examiner (Medical Examiner) is responsible for investigating and determining the cause and manner of death for all homicides, suicides, accidents, and sudden and/or unexpected deaths according to California Government Code Section 27491 and Health and Safety Code Section 102850.

The Medical Examiner is committed to maintaining the highest quality of work product and customer service at the most efficient cost. Staff continually evaluate opportunities to streamline and improve processes, using new technology as it becomes available. At the same time, the Medical Examiner annually evaluates the fees and rates charged to align with current costs, as required under the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) Policy B-29 (Fees, Grants, and Revenue Contracts—Department Responsibility for Cost Recovery). Staff recently conducted a review of all six (6) departmental fees to ensure cost recovery for services provided and the review identified five (5) customer fees to be increased and one (1) fee to be decreased. Fees are charged for optional services, such as a family requested autopsy, as allowed by statute and approved by the Board. The Medical Examiner’s customers are families of individuals whose deaths fall under Medical Examiner jurisdiction, law enforcement agencies, Deputy District Attorneys, Deputy Public Defenders and other defense attorneys, health agencies and mortuaries. The current fee schedule was approved by the Board on May 21, 2024 (20), when the Board approved a two-year phased increase for Medical Examiner fees, which was one of the options presented. The Medical Examiner has continued to analyze and propose updates to the fees to include increases in County costs and will continue to return to the Board annually with updated fees, in an effort to achieve full cost recovery.

The Auditor and Controller has reviewed and approved the supporting documentation and methodology used to determine the proposed fees to be adjusted in this proposal. The tables below show the County’s current fee and the proposed fee.

Fees in the Administrative Code to be Increased (5):

The proposed increases to the Medical Examiner’s fees are based on negotiated salary and benefit increases and adjusted to achieve full cost recovery.

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Fee	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Certification of Documents	\$3.10	\$3.75
Printing and photocopying of Documents	\$1.60	\$2.00
CD of Digital Photographs	\$23.70	\$29.60
Family Requested Autopsy	\$4,876.20	\$5,168.90
Histology (30-minute Use of Photo Microscope)	\$30.60	\$37.20

Fee in the Administrative Code to be Decreased (1):

The proposed decrease to the Medical Examiner's Observer Safety Clothing fee is based on a decrease in direct cost for supplies.

Fee	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Observer Safety Clothing	\$7.40	\$7.20

Today's action proposes to update all six (6) departmental fees, amend Section Article XX 364.6 of the Administrative Code, and waive Board Policy B-29 since full cost recovery will not be achieved in year 2.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed action supports the Sustainability Initiative of the County of San Diego's 2025 –2030 Strategic Plan by aligning services to available resources to maintain fiscal stability and ensure long-term solvency.

Respectfully submitted,



Andrew Strong for

EBONY N. SHELTON
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

Attachment A: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CODE ARTICLE XX SECTION 364.6, RELATING TO MEDICAL EXAMINER FEES AND CHARGES (Clean Copy)

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Attachment B: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CODE ARTICLE XX SECTION 364.6, RELATING TO MEDICAL EXAMINER FEES AND CHARGES (Informational Copy)

Attachment C: SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE