

**Maryland Workers' Compensation
Commissioners' Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 25, 2021**

Call to Order: Chairman R. Karl Aumann called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Present: Chairman Aumann and Commissioners Kathleen Evans, James Forrester, Allan Kittleman, Morrisann Martin, Howard Metz, Ju Oh, Maureen Quinn, Delia Schadt and Tracey Parker-Warren.

Staff members attending were Mary Ahearn, Jerome Reichmister, M.D., Scott Curtis, and Stacey L. Roig, Secretary of the Commission.

The Chairman reminded all outside guests who were attending via telephone to please mute their phones and reminded them that this is a meeting of the Commissioners and not an open forum for questions, comments, etc.

A list of guests who called in to this Open Meeting is attached to the Minutes.

Approval of Minutes: The Minutes of the February 11, 2021 Commissioners' Meeting were reviewed and, upon motion of Commissioner Metz and second of Commissioner Evans, the Minutes were approved with a unanimous vote.

Chairman's Report: The Chairman reported the weather cancellations have been challenging without the school system closure decisions as the basis for docket cancellations. In addition, the backlog of cases continues to grow and cancellations for the weather do not help the situation. The Chairman asked the Commissioners to encourage the community to file continuances as soon as they know that a continuance will be needed so that we can fill that docket slot with another case in line for a hearing. If there is no improvement in the number of late filings for continuances, the Commission will have to return to the method for filling dockets that was used pre-pandemic. While scheduled hearings are preferred by all, the Commission cannot afford the backlog that builds when last minute continuances prevent the maximum number of cases to be heard in a docket. The Commission has remained efficient but, the goal is to get cases heard as quickly as possible. The Workers' Compensation Oversight Committee may convene for a short virtual meeting to discuss the legislation moving through the committees. The Chairman does not have a solid date for that meeting yet, but most of the legislation is focused on COVID-19 presumptions, although there is other legislation being discussed that could affect Commission operations, as a whole. The Chairman is still waiting on final approval of the budget. The Chairman also reported that there is no change to the telework mandate and many Commission employees are receiving vaccines.

Old Business: Commissioner Forrester discussed a recent trend of cases coming to a hearing without medical records or completed IME's. Several Commissioners agreed. Commissioner Metz discussed case coding when continuances are requested.

New Business: Commissioner Evans discussed exhibits being emailed and requested that the instructions for Virtual Hearings be changed to remove the email option. She also requested that a Notice be added to the web page regarding the elimination of the email option for VHR exhibits. Commissioner Kittleman requested that the Commission require that the name of the person handling the case and their direct contact information be added to the documents so that the correct person can be contacted quickly. All the Commissioners agreed, and Mary Ahearn will have a notice posted.

Medical Alerts: Dr. Reichmister reminded everyone to continue with safety precautions of social distancing, washing hands frequently, wearing masks and avoiding crowds. Dr. Reichmister also reported that Dr. Fauci is starting a Focus Group to look at possible long-term problems for COVID patients. A European study is underway looking at COVID patients who were hospitalized, which may be insightful into other lung diseases. Dr. Reichmister discussed “COVID Arm”, a new phenomenon that occurs about one week after the COVID vaccine injection is received. Patients have reported a 3–4-inch red, itchy rash that lasts about one week.

Adjournment: Upon a motion by Commissioner Forrester and second by Commissioner Martin and upon unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 9:56 a.m.

R. Karl Aumann, Chairman

Stacey L. Roig, Secretary

Public Attendees to the Commissioners' Meeting
February 25, 2021

Name	Law Firm, Company or Other Affiliation
Antonio R. Lopez	Schenker, Krause & Lopez (employees of Zurich American Insurance)
Cindy L. Armstrong, Esquire	Erlandson, Vernon & Daney, LLC IWIF/Chesapeake Employers' Insurance Company
Joan P. Adelman	Rollins, Smalkin, Richards & Mackie, L.L.C.
Paul G. Donoghue	Franklin & Prokopik
Maija B. Jackson, Esq.	Schwartz, Metz & Wise, P.A.
Christine Krone	