

**Maryland Workers' Compensation
Commissioners' Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 13, 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, Howard Metz, Maureen Quinn and Tracey Parker-Warren.

Staff members attending were Mary Ahearn, Amy Lackington, Scott Curtis, Jerome Reichmister, M.D. and Stacey L. Roig, Secretary of the Commission. No members of the public attended this meeting.

Approval of Minutes: The Minutes of the April 22, 2020 Commissioners' Meeting were reviewed, and with a motion made by Commissioner Parker-Warren and second by Commissioner Evans, to accept the Minutes, the Minutes were approved with a unanimous vote.

Chairman's Report: The Chairman Reported on a change of process for approval to attend out of state conferences. A request to attend must be submitted to DBM for approval. The July 2021 SAWCA conference will be in-person only, as will the MWCEA Convention in Ocean City in September. The WCI Conference in Orlando, FL in December will be in-person and will include several other organizations meeting in conjunction with WCI. The Chairman provided an update on the UEF report due in September. Mary Ahearn will be representing the Commission on the committee, along with Edgar Dodd for ~~SEFSIE~~, a DBM Budget Analyst and Michael Burns for the UEF. The committee has completed its first meeting. Governor Larry Hogan announced a \$100 incentive payment to state employees who receive their vaccination for COVID-19. More information will come shortly. The Chairman announced that Steve Griffin, Director of Court Reporting, will be retiring in June 2021. Cherry Tate, Supervisor of Public Service and a 31-year employee of the State of MD, will also be retiring June 1st. The Commission has submitted a comprehensive list of telework schedules to DBM for review. The list is due by June 1st. The list submitted by the Commission is a hybrid of telework and in office work. DBM will be reviewing all plans in June for approval. The Chairman reminded the Commissioners that the Virtual Remote Hearings (VRH) are set by hand and difficult to track because there are so many moving parts. The moment that a Commissioner or Assistant becomes aware of a canceled or postponed VRH, please contact Amy Lackington so that she can work on filling that time slot with another case. Scott Curtis discussed the eight-year Regulation Review and will be sending out updates to the Regs for review by the Commissioners. Finally, the Chairman announced that a pipe on the third floor burst about a week prior to the meeting. The pipe has been repaired but, bathrooms and other parts of the building are still in disrepair.

Old Business: Commissioner Kittleman asked about backlog numbers and the Chairman stated that the numbers are manageable and will diminish quickly once we are able to go back to full dockets. The Commission is looking at the oldest cases and modifying dockets to keep the backlog under control. Commissioner Evans asked about wearing masks and cleaning between hearings. The Chairman reminded the Commissioners that the Commission is an Executive Agency and will follow the Governor's Orders as they are issued.

New Business: Commissioner Evans requested a form change to incorporate the attorney’s email address and cell phone number into the entry of appearance forms for quick access to contact information of the attorney, not just the attorney’s office. Mary Ahearn and Stacey Roig will work on getting those updates incorporated into the forms. Commissioner Parker-Warren discussed withdrawal of appearance and an attorney who withdrew his appearance one day prior to a hearing. Scott Curtis will review the regulations for withdrawal of appearance and Mary Ahearn will investigate the requests for withdrawal to the Commissioners’ queues. Commissioner Parker-Warren also asked about a return to the non-scheduled hearing times and the Chairman reminded everyone that the Commission will follow the Governor’s guidance and orders. Commissioner Metz suggested not placing unrepresented claimants on the dockets after 12:00 noon to make it easier to fill gaps in the schedule as they happen. Unrepresented claimants are very difficult to reach and there are no alternatives to calling them directly. The Chairman understood the situation; however, there are 6000 cases waiting to be heard and there is no mechanism to add “unrepresented” as a criterion for setting cases.

Medical Alerts: Dr. Reichmister reminded everyone to continue with safety precautions of social distancing, washing hands frequently, wearing masks and avoiding crowds. Dr. Reichmister discussed a handout he provided to the Commissioners in their meeting packets, “6 Lifestyle Changes Patients Should Make to Prevent Heart Disease.” Dr. Reichmister provided several medical alerts and information of interest to the Commissioners.

Adjournment: Upon a motion by Commissioner Forrester and second by Commissioner Quinn and upon unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 10:16 a.m.

R. Karl Aumann, Chairman

Stacey L. Roig, Secretary