

DUTCHESS COUNTY OPENS STATE OF THE ART MEDICAL EXAMINER OFFICE

POUGHKEEPSIE — Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro and Acting Commissioner of Health Dr. Kari Reiber were joined by county officials and community leaders to officially open the County's new Medical Examiner's Office at 168 Washington Street in the City of Poughkeepsie. The Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce was on hand to host the ribbon cutting ceremony which was followed by tours of the new state-of-the-art facility.



Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro and Acting Commissioner of Health Dr. Kari Reiber cut the ribbon to officially open the new Dutchess County Medical Examiner's Office in the City of Poughkeepsie.

For years, the Dutchess County Medical Examiner has utilized multiple locations for its operations. Administrative offices were located at the Dutchess County Department of Health, while autopsies were conducted at Vassar Brothers Medical Center, where the Medical Examiner shared morgue space with the hospital's pathology department. This created logistical challenges and required inefficient traveling between locations. There was also no adequate space for families and loved ones to identify the deceased or speak with staff. To address these issues, former County Executive William R. Steinhaus proposed a \$3.75 million bond resolution for the design and construction of a new facility that was approved by the Dutchess County Legislature in July 2011.

"Today we are very pleased to have an efficient, state-of-the-art Medical Examiner facility," said County Executive Molinaro. "The new Medical Examiner's Office prioritizes compassion for grieving families and helps provide some sense of closure during very difficult times."

The new 5,116 square foot secure facility houses administrative offices as well as an autopsy room and morgue space under one roof, providing an efficient and secure working environment. Features of the new facility include:

- A comfortable waiting room for families to meet with staff and get information. The waiting area features a large, shatterproof glass viewing panel that enables families and loved ones to view the deceased and confirm identity.
- The building is outfitted with state-of-the-art equipment to facilitate efficiency and ease of operations while minimizing the risk of injuries to staff.
- The morgue can hold up to sixteen decedents. In the event of an emergency that might impact local hospitals or funeral homes, such as multiple fatality event; additional space is available in a refrigerated trailer that can hold twenty additional bodies.

- Ample storage space is available for both supplies and evidence. The existence of a secure evidence storage room ensures that proper chain of custody and evidence handling procedures are in place for law enforcement.
- Building design features use of clear story glass to provide abundant natural lighting and maximize energy savings.
- Exterior building façade is designed to blend into the surrounding environment. The facility is situated behind the County's record retention center, obscuring it from view from Washington Street. The receiving area for the building is out of public view and enables quick transfer of bodies from transfer vehicles into the facility.

Dr. Kari Reiber, who now serves as Acting Commissioner of Health and served as Chief Medical Examiner for more than 10 years, noted, "We finally have the proper facilities to conduct our work and can offer an appropriate place for families during a very difficult time. I am grateful for the support of County Executive Molinaro and the County Legislature as well as former County Executive Bill Steinhaus for making this facility a reality to best serve our community."

The Dutchess County Medical Examiner's Office is responsible, in the interests of justice, public health, and public safety, for the investigation of sudden, unexpected, suspicious and violent deaths within Dutchess County and for the evaluation and documentation of injuries in live victims of abuse. The Dutchess County Medical Examiner Office investigates more than 800 deaths and conducts over 300 postmortem examinations each year. Of the 309 cases accepted by the medical examiner in 2012, 49% were certified as deaths due to natural causes, while 34% were ruled accidents and 7% were suicides. Other or undetermined causes as well as homicides were the least prevalent.

For more information about the Dutchess County Medical Examiner Office, visit www.dutchessny.gov.