

Agenda Item Report



Winnebago County
The Wave of the Future

DATE: October 17, 2023
FROM: Medical Examiner Cheryl Brehmer
RE: Cremation Permit Fees

General Description:

The Winnebago County Board is responsible for setting all fees relating to services rendered by the coroner or medical examiner. I kindly ask that this committee assist the medical examiner's office with reevaluating the cremation permit fee.

Action Requested:

We are asking that the committee support an increase to the cremation permit fee in the amount of \$10.00 raising the permit fee to \$170.00 beginning 01/01/2024.

Procedural Steps:

Committee of Jurisdiction: **Judiciary and Public Safety** Meeting date: 11/06/2023
Action taken: _____ Vote: _____
County Board Meeting date:

Background:

The fee of \$150.00 for issuance of a cremation permit was established by the county board prior to 2012. According to WI State Statute 59.36 the board shall set the fees for all services rendered by the coroner or medical examiner. The board did allow for an increase raising the permit fee to \$200.00 in mid-2015 but, due to WI State Statute 59.365, the moratorium on the fee increase disallowed for the increase and the fee was set back to \$150.00. In accordance with this moratorium the cremation permit fee may be increased but may not exceed the annual percentage change in the U.S. consumer price index. The board did pass Ordinance 147-122022 which increased the cremation permit fee in January 2023 by \$10.00 which increased the permit fee to \$160.00.

Costs associated to materials and professional supplies has continued to increase over the years and increased fees for autopsy, toxicology and transportation services will be assessed to the 2024 budget. Before a cremation permit is issued, a full body examination of the decedent is required along with inquiry into the cause and manner of death in accordance with WI State Statute 979.10 (1) (3) (a). We are hoping that the increase will help to offset some of the known operational expenses.

Policy Discussion:

Winnebago County is one of the few counties that does not assess a death certificate signing fee. Because this fee was not established before the fee moratorium was put in place, this is a fee that we are unable to increase in accordance with the consumer price index. In addition to deaths that are investigated by the medical examiner's office, deaths where physicians are unable or unwilling to sign a death certificate create added burden onto the investigators. As we are unable to assess a fee for the time and materials for these added investigations, increased revenue from allowable sources could help to offset these costs.

Attachments:

WI State Statutes 59.36 and 59.365

WI Coroner and Medical Examiner Fee Schedule