

**Maryland Workers' Compensation
Commissioners' Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 25, 2020**

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

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.

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, Amy Lackington, and Stacey L. Roig, Secretary of the Commission.

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

Approval of Minutes: The Minutes of the June 11, 2020 Commissioners' Meeting were reviewed and, upon motion of Commissioner Quinn and second of Commissioner Parker-Warren, the Minutes were approved with a unanimous vote.

Chairman's Report: The Chairman discussed the cancellation of the MWCEA Conference in September for 2020. The decision was not easy but prudent, given the COVID-19 pandemic situation. There will be other programs that will be held virtually this year, including SAWCA, NWCJA and IAIABC in July, August, and September, respectively. The in-person hearings are proceeding well. The processes and procedures are very different and that does leave gaps in the day, but the transition has been smooth. The Chairman thanked the Commissioners and the WC Community for their patience and flexibility. The Chairman also commented that contract tracing online has been a welcome addition to keeping the process smooth. The Chairman also specifically praised the Court Reporters and Security personnel for all their extra work to maintain all levels of safety in the hearing rooms for all participating in the in-person hearings. The Chairman was very pleased to announce that all the hard work has paid off with the reduction of the backlog by 41% overall and a 56% reduction in the cases over 30 days. Cases have been set through August. The Chairman thanked the claims processing staff and, specifically Debbie Thomas, Angie Eberhardt and Dorothy Smith for all their hard work with manually setting the calendar. In addition, the reduction in cases awaiting a hearing is also a result of both sides in the cases working together to resolve issues. The Chairman also announced that the Enterprise Modernization team, while working almost 100% remotely, is on track to open CompHub on September 1, 2020. In addition to the EMP team working remotely, at least half of the WCC staff is also teleworking with others in the office and some in a hybrid of some telework and some days in the office. Please encourage the use of the touchless thermometers for staff as well as outsiders, who are required to have their temperature taken before entering the sites.

New Business: Commissioner Evans asked for clarification on the timeline for when people who have already had coronavirus can return to the office after their recovery. The Commission has requested additional information and guidance from the MD Department of Health and is awaiting the response. Dr. Reichmister advised that the SDC Guidelines suggest that employers allow flexibility with a self-quarantine for two weeks after diagnosis. If after seven (7) days the person is asymptomatic, they may return to work.

Commissioner Quinn suggested an alternative to attorneys and others uploading 200-page exhibits by providing a summary of the physical therapy sessions and work hardening sessions, which will provide

all the important information without all the extra paper. Commissioner Martin added that all parties should be encouraged not to duplicate pages and documents that are already in the system.

Commissioner Parker-Warren discussed a call-in interpreter service that is available for immediate service in the hearing if needed. Dorothy Smith sent out the telephone number to all the Commissioners. Please check email and make note of the number for this service.

Old Business: No Report

Medical Alerts: Dr. Reichmister reminded everyone to please be safe, be cautious, wear masks, use frequent hand washing, social distance and stay home as much as possible. Dr. Reichmister also presented information on a hand sanitizer from Mexico that has a warning from the USFDA because the product contains wood alcohol, which can be absorbed into the skin and is poisonous. Dr. Reichmister also reported on a study that found certain blood groups to be a more or less risk for COVID-19. The A blood type group is at the highest risk compared to the B group. The O blood type group has little to no risk as compared to the others. Dr. Reichmister also reported on a live vaccine testing to reduce the symptoms of coronavirus. This is not a vaccine to prevent contracting the virus, but it is another front on which the researchers are working on attacking the virus.

Adjournment: Upon a motion by Commissioner Forrester and second by Commissioner Evans and upon unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

R. Karl Aumann, Chairman

Stacey L. Roig, Secretary

Name	Law Firm, Company or Other Affiliation
Cindy L. Armstrong, Esquire	Erlandson, Vernon & Daney, LLC
Douglas M. Gross, Esq.	LAW OFFICES OF DOUGLAS M. GROSS, LLC
Joan P. Adelman	IWIF/Chesapeake Employers' Insurance Company
Neydyn S. Gomez, Esq.	Antezana & Antezana, LLC
Paul G. Donoghue	Rollins, Smalkin, Richards & Mackie, L.L.C.
Suja M. Varghese, Assistant County Attorney	Baltimore County Office of Law
Sara El-Shall, Esq.	Shultz Legal, LLC
John D. Kromkowski	Law Office of John D. Kromkowski