



OFFICE OF THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR



London N. Breed, Mayor
Naomi M. Kelly, City Administrator

VIA E-MAIL ONLY

April 20, 2020

The Honorable Hillary Ronen
The Honorable Matt Haney
San Francisco Board of Supervisors
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102

RE: File #200382: Urging the City to Develop Options to Minimize Postmortem Body Handling Costs During the COVID-19 Crisis

Dear Supervisors Ronen and Haney:

I write in response to your resolution about the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME). As we face these challenging times, we can be thankful that San Francisco is flattening the curve and that the number of deaths is mitigated by San Franciscans working together. I remain committed to providing whatever assistance I can to those families experiencing the worst possible outcome of this pandemic.

Your resolution urges the City Administrator to explore ways to minimize post-death body handling costs, develop clear options available to families who have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, and provide information in various languages. Existing law allows us to address this issue immediately.

Administrative Code Section 8.14 authorizes OCME to charge certain fees and states that all cases brought into the Medical Examiner shall be billed for transportation, personnel handling, and storage costs, with certain exemptions. Effectively immediately and applied retroactively, we will exempt charges for cases where the death is related to COVID-19 using the authority in Sec. 8.14(b)(6).

In California, matters related to death and the handling of dead bodies are governed by state laws. If a decedent has made no provisions for his or her death or when the estate is insufficient to provide for internment, Health and Safety Code §7104 provides that the county is responsible and must meet certain state requirements, including bearing the cost of the internment.

San Francisco already has programs to assist individuals and families, also mandated by state law. The District Attorney's Victim Services Division (www.sfdistrictattorney.org/victim-services) helps victims of crime mitigate the trauma of crime, including assisting with funeral and burial expenses.

The Human Services Agency's Public Administrator (<https://www.sfhsa.org/services/care-support/public-administrator>) takes care of the affairs of those who have died and do not have family members able or willing to manage the estate.

Please do not hesitate to contact me immediately on issues of urgent concern. During this emergency, it is essential we work together to meet the needs of all San Franciscans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Naomi M. Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

NAOMI M. KELLY
City Administrator

CC: Mayor London N. Breed
Members, Board of Supervisors
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
District Attorney Chesa Boudin
Trent Rhorer, San Francisco Human Services Agency