

Illinois Forensic Science Commission

Meeting Minutes

10 December 2025

I. **Call to order**

Illinois State Police Director Designee Robin Woolery and Executive Director Amy Watroba called to order the meeting of the Illinois Forensic Science Commission at approximately 10:03 a.m. on December 10, 2025. The meeting was held via Web Ex.

II. **Roll-call**

1. The following Forensic Science Commission members and staff were present via Web Ex:

1. Brendan Kelly, Chairperson*
2. Claire Dragovich, Vice Chairperson
3. Dr. Ponni Arunkumar, Member
4. Jillian Baker, Member
5. Jeff Buford, Member
6. Judge Art Hill (ret.), Member
7. Jodi Hoos, Member
8. Dr. Cris Hughes, Member
9. Jeanne Richeal, Member
10. Caryn Tucker, Member
11. Carrie Ward, Member
12. Robin Woolery, Director Designee
13. Amy Watroba, Executive Director

2. Quorum confirmed.

3. The following members of the public were present via Web Ex:

1. Sarah Boyle*
2. Maya Dukmasova
3. Gina Havlik
4. Elizabeth Leahy
5. Kevin McMahon*
6. Amy Miles
7. Timothy Ruppel
8. Lindsay Simpson
9. Peter St. Andre*
10. Timothy Tripp

*Denotes individual who joined meeting after roll call.

III. **Review/Adoption of Minutes**

1. The motion to adopt the minutes from the September 10, 2025 Commission meeting with noted typographical corrections was approved.

IV. **Executive Director Summary**

1. Legal & Legislative Update:

- a. ED Watroba provided an update on legislation related to Coverdell grant funding, including information shared with participants at the NAFSB Conference in October.
- b. ED Watroba noted that Illinois's legislative session begins in mid-January. A 2026 legislation tracker is available on the Commission's shared workspace and ED Watroba will send emails notifying Commission members of noteworthy bills that are introduced.
- c. ED Watroba shared information about one recent Illinois Supreme Court decision related to forensic evidence (*People v. Smith*, 2025 IL 130067).

2. Education/Outreach Update:

- a. ED Watroba attended and presented at the National Association of Forensic Science Boards (NAFSB) annual conference at the University of New Haven in October. Deputy Director Woolery also attended the annual conference. ED Watroba and DD Woolery found the presentations at the conference to be informative and relevant to the work of the Commission. ED Watroba will address specific topics from the conference during the discussion portion of the meeting.

The 2026 NAFSB Annual Conference will be held in Milwaukee from October 13th-15th. Given the proximity of the 2026 conference, ED Watroba and DD Woolery encouraged Commission Members to consider attending. ED Watroba will explore possible budget funds for the next fiscal year to assist Commission Members who may wish to attend.

ED Watroba shared that she was elected to serve as an Executive Committee Member of the NAFSB on December 8th during the Annual Business Meeting. Assuming this role will allow ED Watroba to engage with NAFSB more directly and substantively and will directly benefit the Commission's work. Ms. Ward commented that she appreciated ED Watroba's willingness to serve on the Executive Committee of the NAFSB and that her participation will benefit the Commission.

- b. The American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) 2026 Annual Conference will be held from February 9-13, 2026. ED Watroba and Ms. Richeal will attend the annual conference. ED Watroba will report back to subcommittees about any relevant presentations. Ms. Richeal stated that

she hopes to attend presentations that are relevant to challenges to forensic evidence while at the conference that are not available at more technology-focused conferences.

3. General:

- a. One Net Annual Training: ED Watroba reminded Commission Members to complete their annual training modules by the end of December.
- b. Effective January 1, 2026, Claire Dragovich will serve as the Commission Chairperson for a 2-year term pursuant to the change in the Commission's statute. ED Watroba thanked Director Kelly for serving as the Commission's Chairperson for the last 4 years and he will continue to serve as a member of the Commission per statute.
- c. ED Watroba suggested that the Commission compile an annual report starting with calendar year 2026. In reviewing the work of the Commission over the past 4 years and the Commission's increased activity and output, an annual report would serve as a useful resource and transparent public-facing document. ED Watroba suggested that it would be easier for members of the public and stakeholders to have an annual report to review summarizing the work of the Commission rather than having to look through voluminous minutes and agendas from Commission and subcommittee meetings. Also, thinking forward, it would be nice to build a basic framework for an annual report as the Commission's work increases and if the Commission eventually has a designated budget that would need to be addressed in an annual report. ED Watroba suggested that she compile the annual report with input from the subcommittee chairs and that the annual report be reviewed and approved at the Commission's March meeting for the previous calendar year.

DD Woolery agreed with the proposal to begin generating an annual report for the Commission in 2026. The Commission has been building out its structure over the last 4 years and as the Commission continues to develop the annual report would be a great backbone for the commission. DD Woolery noted that many other boards and commissions generate annual reports, so the Commission's decision to begin creating an annual report aligns with that practice. ED Watroba indicated that an impetus for this idea was her review of the number of subcommittee meetings that the Commission has held since its inception. She observed a significant increase in the total number of subcommittee meetings held in 2025. This indicates 2025 was a year of significant growth for the Commission in its work discussing and addressing issues relevant to the delivery of forensic science services in Illinois.

Finally, ED Watroba thanked John Hanlon for his 4 years of service on the Commission and his previous work on the Governor's Task Force on Forensic Science. When Mr. Hanlon's term expires in late December there

will be an opening for a new Commission Member to serve in one of the “community representative” category of Commission members.

V. **Subcommittee Reports**

1. Quality Systems Subcommittee: Claire Dragovich, subcommittee chairperson, shared that the subcommittee will be sending out its letter requesting reports of significant non-conformities for 2025 by the end of the calendar year, which is earlier than in previous years, to give lab systems more time to prepare their responses. The subcommittee has met twice since the last quarterly meeting. The subcommittee completed its review of the Report issued in May by the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) regarding activities at the Analytical Forensic Testing Laboratory (AFTL) in Chicago. Ms. Dragovich will provide a more detailed update on the topic during the Discussion section of the agenda.
2. Training and Career Development Subcommittee: Caryn Tucker, subcommittee chairperson, provided an update on subcommittee projects. The subcommittee continues work on the videos for the “Fundamentals of Forensic Science Video Series.” The introductory video is complete and has been added to the Latent Print and Drug Chemistry videos. Those two videos are complete and will be discussed during the discussion portion of the meeting. The other disciplines (Firearms, Toxicology, DNA, and Trace) are in the content-development phase. The format and structure of the remaining videos will be similar to the two completed pilot videos. The subcommittee hopes to have an additional video(s) complete and ready for review at the March Commission Meeting. DD Woolery thanked the subcommittee members and subject matter experts for their work on this project and complimented their work on the Latent Print and Drug Chemistry videos.
3. Public Policy Subcommittee: ED Watroba provided an update on the work of the Public Policy Subcommittee. The subcommittee met twice since the last Commission Meeting. During the October meeting, the subcommittee discussed and identified a topic related to the UIC AFTL THC testing issues that might be appropriate for the Public Policy Subcommittee to address. The subcommittee will be discussing creating a complaint resource document providing contact information for state and local publicly funded ISO 17025 accredited laboratories. At the subcommittee’s November meeting the subcommittee heard a presentation from representatives of the Kane County Forensic Laboratory who provided an update on the status of construction and operations and current goals and timelines.
4. Technology Subcommittee: Subcommittee chairperson Jeff Buford reported that the subcommittee is transitioning from the completion of its broad-based discussions related to AI applications in forensic science. The subcommittee is now following up on its previous work on Phase II-Emerging Technologies with agencies that have successfully implemented new technologies. ISP will provide a presentation on acquisition and implementation of new technology in its toxicology section. The subcommittee discussed inviting guest speakers

on other areas related to technology including possible technology applications related to quality assurance/quality systems.

5. Forensic Investigative Genetic Genealogy (FIGG) Subcommittee: Subcommittee chairperson Dr. Cris Hughes reported that the subcommittee met twice since the last Commission Meeting. The subcommittee is continuing its work on three FIGG resource documents intended to support law enforcement agencies and medical examiner/coroner offices who may consider using FIGG for casework. The subcommittee has completed the content for the brochure which will direct agencies to the other resource documents on the Commission's website when complete. The subcommittee is now working on the lengthy FAQ document. The final document is a workflow document which is in draft form and will be completed after the subcommittee completes its work on the FAQ document.

6. Drugs Subcommittee:

Jill Baker stated that the subcommittee does not have anything to report at this time because the subcommittee's first meeting is scheduled for January. Any Commission Members who wish to join this new subcommittee should contact ED Watroba.

VI. **Issues for Discussion**

1. Discussion and possible action on Fundamentals of Forensic Science Video Series Pilot Videos:

ED Watroba shared that the pilot videos for Latent Prints and Drug Chemistry are complete. ED Watroba thanked the subcommittee members and subject matter experts who dedicated a significant amount of time and effort to create and complete the videos. The individuals who worked on the two pilot videos also worked through many technical, format, and style issues that will streamline the creation of the remaining videos. Each video has the same introductory video about the series and the Commission before the content portion of the videos.

DD Woolery inquired about how we can track how many views the videos receive. ED Watroba indicated that she can initially track the number of views on the You Tube channel and that information can inform decisions regarding how to market the videos. Dr. Hughes suggested soliciting comments via the Commission's email account or a survey in the long term. Judge Hill suggested considering ways we can contact stakeholders, universities, and high schools to let them know that the videos are an available resource. DD Woolery suggested using the NAFSB as a resource to notify student members that the videos are available. These efforts could align with the Commission's general marketing strategies. ED Watroba indicated that the NAFSB's newsletter might be a way to highlight the availability of the videos. ED Watroba also suggested that the Commission may want to consider creating its own social

media presence, such as a Commission Linked In page. Ms. Dragovich expressed support for the idea of having a social media presence, even if the social media platform(s) are used simply as a mechanism for sharing information about public meetings and resources added to the Commission's website. She also suggested posting links to the videos during National Forensic Science Week.

Ms. Tucker indicated the subcommittee can discuss the topics of marketing, tracking and feedback at the next subcommittee meeting. ED Watroba indicated that she could have the website provide an option to email the Commission with comments about the videos under the links to the videos as a short-term way to solicit feedback about the videos. The subcommittee and Commission can then explore other possible long-term options.

ED Watroba recommended that if the Commission votes to approve the videos, that the Commission also give the Training and Career Development Subcommittee the ability to make updates to the videos as needed.

ED Watroba opened the floor to public comment from participants present both in-person and on-line prior to the vote. No public comment was offered.

A motion was made to approve the Fundamentals of Forensic Science Videos addressing Latent Prints and Drug Chemistry and to give the Training and Career Development Subcommittee the ability to make minor edits to the videos as needed. The motion passed following a roll call vote (11 yes votes, 0 no votes/abstentions, 2 Members absent).

2. Discussion and possible action on Revised Commission Bylaws:

ED Watroba reviewed the proposed changes to the Commission's bylaws to address the election of a Vice Chairperson and the duties of the Vice Chairperson. She next reviewed the proposed changes to Section 17 related to the Commission Chairperson to address topics discussed at the last quarterly meeting and to align the bylaws with the change to the Commission's enabling statute which takes effect on January 1, 2026.

Ms. Ward expressed her approval of the proposed changes, particularly the provision that would permit the Executive Director to preside over meetings if there was no Chairperson or Vice Chairperson in place. The provision provides continuity as well as flexibility for the Commission to take next steps on its own timeline.

Judge Hill suggested making changes to ensure concordance between the proposed changes and paragraph (a) of Section 30 of the bylaws. ED Watroba suggested copying language from Section 17 to the paragraph in Section 30 as a solution. DD Woolery agreed that changes should be made to Section 30 based on changes that were made to the Commission's statute after the bylaws were originally drafted.

ED Watroba opened the floor to public comment from participants present both in-person and on-line prior to the vote. No public comment was offered.

A motion was made to approve the amendments to the Commission Bylaws reflected in the draft document with the additional change to Section 30 as discussed. The motion passed following a roll call vote (11 yes votes, 0 no votes/abstentions, 2 Members absent).

3. Update and Discussion on THC Testing at UIC Analytical Forensic Testing Laboratory (AFTL):

ED Watroba provided initial updates on this topic. First, ED Watroba shared that the agenda for the AAFS Conference indicates that there will be a presentation from 2 defense attorneys on the topic of THC testing at AFTL at the conference. ED Watroba will attend that presentation and will report back to the subcommittees and Commission on the content of the presentation. Second, ED Watroba stated that there has been continued public interest and media interest in the topic of testing at AFTL and the Commission's work related to AFTL as demonstrated by attendance at meetings and inquiries submitted to her office. ED Watroba will provide updates if there is any additional coverage related to these topics. Third, the Quality Systems Subcommittee has completed the first step in its analysis and review of the UIC Report, which involved going through every page of the document. The subcommittee is now beginning its work drafting a first responsive statement which may include recommendations based on the information in the report and information shared at meetings. As discussed at the last Commission meeting, the subcommittee is drafting a response to the UIC Report first because the Report is publicly available.

ED Watroba stated that there are many issues which have been noted by the subcommittee during its review of the Report, including issues beyond the problems that existed with the testing at the lab. One such issue is distinguishing between problems with the testing and any responses or corrective actions flowing from the testing problems. The subcommittee has had extensive discussions related to the fact that the University hired a law firm to conduct the investigation and issue the Report and that the Report was written by lawyers. It is clear from the Report that they consulted with a toxicologist but there have been noted errors from a scientific standpoint in the Report that may be the result of misunderstanding because the Report's authors are lawyers. During a meeting, the subcommittee also was made aware of the fact that the same law firm continues to represent the University in some aspects of litigation related to AFTL. The subcommittee has noted that the Report does not thoroughly address all the underlying or base problems and does not address the sufficiency of any corrective actions or lab responses to the underlying testing issues.

ED Watroba shared information and thoughts about a presentation she watched at the NAFSB Conference. The presentation related to a particular

DNA analyst's work at the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) which has been covered extensively in the media. ED Watroba took note of the fact that one thing CBI did was hire a consulting firm to conduct an audit of the lab. That consulting firm compiled a report which is published on CBI's website. ED Watroba noted that the audit team was not from a law firm, though it did include legal professionals. The multidisciplinary team of professionals included members with expertise in the underlying disciplines, public and private sectors, forensic science, law enforcement, military, and academia, among other things. The team members had experience with ISO 17025 compliance, ANAB accreditation, statutory governance, and industry best practices. ED Watroba thought it was noteworthy to share with the Commission that this type of audit or assessment is possible while the Commission continues its work evaluating, studying, and making recommendations related to AFTL.

Ms. Dragovich expressed her thanks to the members of the QS subcommittee for their work during the subcommittee's very deliberate, slow, and in-depth review of the UIC Report. As indicated, the subcommittee will be moving forward with a response based on the review performed.

Dr. Arunkumar inquired about the possibility of conducting the type of audit CBI undertook. ED Watroba noted that while the Commission does not have direct oversight authority over labs, the scope of what the Commission can do under its enabling statute is quite broad. ED Watroba stressed that the Commission must always be careful to act within its scope but clarified that the Commission can take actions consistent with its statute in response to errors that occur at labs in Illinois despite not being an "oversight" type of commission. The Commission's statute empowers the Commission to be reactive and to make recommendations. If the Commission makes a recommendation, it also can communicate that recommendation in any way and to anyone the Commission wants. Ms. Dragovich responded to Dr. Arunkumar's question by stating that to the best of her knowledge, CBI chose to hire external auditors to assist them in assessing the scope of their issue. An important takeaway is that there are vendors in the U.S. that can provide this type of service to a lab system as opposed to hiring a law firm. ED Watroba shared that she believes information about how CBI put the issue out to bid is available on-line.

Judge Hill thanked Ms. Dragovich and ED Watroba for helping the subcommittee go through the UIC Report line-by-line. Judge Hill then shared some observations about the document. First, Judge Hill noted that the UIC Report was written by lawyers hired by the UIC/AFTL and thus the Report should be reviewed keeping in mind that the authors were serving their client(s) in writing the Report. Judge Hill also noted that the UIC Report is publicly available and currently is the document presenting the topic of what happened at AFTL to the public and to stakeholders. It is therefore important that the Commission issue a document addressing the UIC Report. Judge Hill indicated that the subcommittee may bring proposed recommendations to the

Commission at the March meeting. Judge Hill stressed that it is important that the Commission issue a document to help set the record straight and for good of forensic science.

Dr. Arunkumar asked whether it would benefit the Commission to seek help from outside Illinois to assist with the Commission's response and raised the issue of what the Commission's resources are for bringing in outside assistance. Ms. Dragovich responded that the Commission has had subject matter experts from outside of Illinois give presentations and provide information related to issues in forensic toxicology. Ms. Dragovich stated that she does not think the Commission needs outside assistance to be able to respond to the UIC Report. There are many obvious inconsistencies in the UIC Report even on issues not related to forensic science. Ideally, an audit along the lines of what was done by CBI would not be limited just to the UIC Report but rather would involve getting into the substantive documents and materials from the lab. Ms. Dragovich stated that Dr. Arunkumar's point is something that will be discussed at the subcommittee level.

VII. Housekeeping Items

Director Kelly acknowledged the appointment of Ms. Dragovich as the next Chairperson and congratulated Ms. Dragovich on her appointment. Director Kelly thanked DD Woolery for acting in his stead to preside over some meetings during his term as Chairperson. Director Kelly will remain a member of the Commission and ISP will continue to provide administrative support for the Commission's work. He stated he is very proud of how far the Commission has come over the years. Director Kelly thanked John Hanlon for his service to the Commission and thanked all Commission Members who have served and continue to serve. DD Woolery echoed Director Kelly's sentiments.

VIII. Public Comment

No public comment was offered.

IX. Meeting Schedule

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 a.m., on Wednesday, March 11, 2026, at the Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The meeting also will be available via Web Ex.

X. Adjournment

Director Designee Woolery and ED Watroba adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:23 a.m. on December 10, 2025.

Approved: March 11, 2026