[Bracketed and stricken] material is that portion being deleted Underlined material is that portion being added

BILL NO.

SUMMARY – An Ordinance amending Chapter 2.12 of Title 2 of the Clark County Code relating to the coroner's inquest process by amending sections 2.12.010, 2.12.020, 2.12.080, 2.12.090, 2.12.100, 2.12.110, 2.12.120, 2.12.130, 2.12.140, and 2.12.150, adding a new section 2.12.075, and repealing section 2.12.160; revising definitions, procedures relating to the inquest proceeding, and the manner of questioning at inquest proceedings; establishing when an inquest should be held in connection with an officer involved death; changing the term "jury" to "inquest panel"; eliminating the inquest "verdict" and substituting "interrogatories" for the purpose of establishing facts; adding provisions relating to an inquest ombudsperson, pre-inquest conferences, and public access to information relating to coroner inquests; and providing for other matters properly relating thereto.
ORDINANCE NO.

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 2.12 OF TITLE 2 OF THE CLARK COUNTY CODE RELATING TO THE CORONER'S INQUEST PROCESS BY AMENDING SECTIONS 2.12.010, 2.12.020, 2.12.080, 2.12.090, 2.12.100, 2.12.110, 2.12.120, 2.12.130, 2.12.140, AND 2.12.150, ADDING A NEW SECTION 2.12.075, AND REPEALING SECTION 2.12.160: REVISING DEFINITIONS. **PROCEDURES** RELATING TO THE INQUEST PROCEEDING, AND THE MANNER OF QUESTIONING AT INQUEST PROCEEDINGS: ESTABLISHING WHEN AN INQUEST SHOULD BE HELD IN CONNECTION WITH AN OFFICER INVOLVED DEATH; CHANGING THE TERM "JURY" TO "INQUEST PANEL": ELIMINATING THE INQUEST "VERDICT" AND SUBSTITUTING "INTERROGATORIES" FOR THE PURPOSE OF ESTABLISHING FACTS; ADDING PROVISIONS RELATING TO AN INQUEST OMBUDSPERSON, PRE-INQUEST CONFERENCES, AND PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION RELATING TO CORONER INQUESTS; AND PROVIDING FOR OTHER MATTERS PROPERLY RELATING THERETO.

(of Clark County, Nevada)

THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF THE COUNTY OF CLARK, STATE OF NEVADA, DOES HEREBY ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Title 2, Chapter 2.12, section 2.12.010 of the Clark County Code is hereby amended as follows:

2.12.010 - Definitions.

- (a) "Board" means the county commissioners of Clark County.
- (b) "Investigation" means an inquiry by the coroner's office and may include testimony obtained from witnesses under oath.
- (c) ["Inquests"] "Inquest" mean an inquiry [before a jury, with testimony obtained under oath, duly recorded, and verdict handed down.] held in accordance with section 2.12.080 into the death of a person where the circumstances support reasonable grounds to suspect that the death has been occasioned by unnatural means.
- (d) "Records" mean those reports duly summarized on a coroner's office form for inclusion in a register or journal whether bound or not.
- (e) "Reports" mean those findings in written form which are filed in the coroner's office, including examinations, [witnesses] witness statements, correspondence, insurance forms, and other evidence in support of the conclusions and findings recorded on the official records.
- (f) "Autopsy report" means any report of an autopsy, including all reports of laboratory examinations and other technical tests performed.
- (g) "Postmortem examination" means an examination of a dead body by a competent pathologist or licensed physician involving the opening and dissection of the body, including the removal of organs and tissues and fluids and other material for microscopic, toxicological, chemical, bacterial, or other examination as deemed necessary to study the cause of death. "Autopsy" is a synonymous term.
- (h) "Medical examiner" means an individual licensed to practice medicine and surgery in the state of Nevada and who, when practicable, shall be a skilled pathologist with training or experience in forensic pathology and certified by the American Board of Pathology or qualified to be so certified.
- (i) "Toxicologist" is a specialist in the science dealing with poisons and their effect and with problems involved or connected therewith such as clinical, industrial or medical.
- (j) "Prosecutor" is a prosecutor exercising primary authority pursuant to NRS 228.120, NRS 228.125, NRS 228.130, NRS 228.175, NRS 228.177, NRS 252.060, NRS 252.080, NRS 252.100, or [NRS 252.1.10.] NRS 252.110.
- (k) "Officer" is any peace officer as defined by NRS Chapter 289.
- (I) "Qualified magistrate" means a justice of the peace from any jurisdiction within Clark County who is an attorney duly licensed to practice law in the state of Nevada.
- (m) "Presiding officer" shall mean an individual who presides over the inquest proceedings. If the death is not [law enforcement related] an officer involved death, the presiding officer shall be an inquest hearing officer appointed by the board of county commissioners and bearing the qualifications specified in

Section 2.12.020(d). If the death is [caused by an officer, as defined in subsection 2.12.010(k) of this section] an officer involved death, the presiding officer shall be a qualified magistrate as defined by subsection 2.12.010(l) of this section.

- (n) "Interested parties" [are those individuals permitted to pose questions to the presiding officer to ask witnesses at an inquest. An "interested party" must be identified at the inception of the inquest and is defined as] means those persons that are allowed to participate in inquest proceedings and include:
  - (1) A member of the deceased's family; [within the second degree of consanguinity:]
  - (2) [A] In a case where the death is not an officer involved death, the person or persons causing the death or [members of said person or person's family within the second degree of consanguinity] a member of the family of said person or persons;
  - (3) [An attorney duly licensed to practice law in the state of Nevada] In a case where the death is an officer involved death, the officer or officers involved in the death or a member of the family of said officer or officers; or
  - (4) Any other person that the magistrate deems has an interest in the proceeding.
- (o) "Family" includes the spouse or domestic partner of a person and other family members within the second degree of consanguinity.
- (p) "Officer involved death" means the death of a person where the use of force by an officer, while acting in his official capacity, whether physical, chemical or electronic force or force by impact or firearm, may have contributed to the cause of the death or the death of a person as a result of a vehicular accident if the officer, while acting in his official capacity, actively took some role in causing the accident.
- (q) "Attorney representative" means an attorney duly licensed to practice law in the state of Nevada who is retained by the deceased's family or who is retained by an officer or officers involved in the death for the purpose of representing said interested party.
- (r) "Inquest ombudsperson" means an attorney duly licensed to practice law in the state of Nevada who is appointed by the presiding officer to represent the public, including the deceased's family, in all inquest proceedings relating to an officer involved death.

SECTION 2. Title 2, Chapter 2.12, section 2.12.020 of the Clark County Code is hereby amended as follows:

# 2.12.020 - Office established—Jurisdiction—Appointment—Salaries and expenses.

(a) There is hereby created and established the office of county coroner for Clark County, Nevada, with jurisdiction coextensive with the boundaries of Clark County, Nevada.

- (b) The office of said county coroner and related facilities necessary to the administration of the office shall be as designated and provided by the board of county commissioners.
- (c) In accordance with Chapter 2.40.100, the county manager shall appoint as county coroner a suitable and qualified person who, serving at the pleasure of the county manager, shall be either (1) the Clark County district health officer, or Clark County health officer, who, ex officio shall serve as county coroner; and (2) a physician, surgeon, or pathologist, duly qualified and licensed under and pursuant to the laws of the state of Nevada to engage in such professional services; or (3) a competent, reputable law enforcement officer having a minimum of at least five years of law enforcement experience in Clark County, Nevada, and also having the requisite responsible experience in public or business administration for the satisfactory administration of said office. The board of county commissioners shall ratify the county manager's appointment at a regularly held commission meeting.
- (d) The board of county commissioners shall appoint at least three inquest hearing officers, who may preside over inquests that do not involve officer involved deaths. Such officers shall serve at the pleasure of the county commissioners and shall be: (1) a member in good standing of the State Bar of Nevada having a minimum of three years experience in courtroom proceedings or other adversary proceedings of a similar nature in Clark County, Nevada; or, (2) some other person who is determined by the board of county commissioners to have sufficient judicial, quasi-judicial experience or have experience as an administrative hearing officer to preside over the inquest.
- (e) If the death is [caused by an officer as defined by Section 2.12.010(k)] an officer involved death, the chief judge from the township where the death occurred shall appoint a qualified magistrate, as defined in Section 2.12.010(l), to sit as the presiding officer in the inquest.
- (f) Any and all necessary costs, salaries, fees and expenses involved in the operation of the county coroner's office shall be processed and approved as are other county claims.

SECTION 3. Title 2, Chapter 2.12 of the Clark County Code is hereby amended by the addition of a new section 2.12.075 as follows:

### 2.12.075 - Inquest ombudsperson.

- (a) For purposes of inquests when there is an officer involved death, an inquest ombudsperson shall be appointed by the presiding officer to represent the public, including the deceased's family, in all inquest proceedings.
- (b) The inquest ombudsperson shall be appointed by the presiding officer from an inquest ombudsperson group established by the Board of County Commissioners. The process for establishing the group shall be determined by the County Manager but must not conflict with any provision of this section. The process must be approved by the Board, and the names of the persons recommended for the group must be ratified by the Board.

- (c) An inquest ombudsperson shall be paid for his participation in the inquest proceedings in accordance with the rates and procedures established by the Office of Appointed Counsel in the County Manager's Office.
- (d) The person selected as an inquest ombudsperson for a particular inquest must agree that neither he or any person associated with a law firm with which he is associated will provide legal services to or represent any person involved in the officer involved death that is the subject of the inquest.

SECTION 4. Title 2, Chapter 2.12, section 2.12.080 of the Clark County Code is hereby amended as follows:

### 2.12.080 - Inquest—Duties and procedures.

- (a) When the county coroner or his deputy has been informed that a person has been killed or committed suicide or has suddenly died under circumstances affording reasonable ground to suspect that the death has been occasioned by unnatural means, he shall immediately notify the office of the prosecutor and police department or sheriff's office having jurisdiction, so as to afford said prosecutor and police or sheriff's officials an opportunity to assist in the inquiry as to cause of death.
- (b) The coroner shall call an inquest as herein provided if such should be indicated or if such is requested by the prosecutor, or a judge of the district court within the county, but such inquest need not be conducted in any case of death manifestly occasioned by natural cause, suicide, accident or when the death is publicly known to have been caused by a person already in custody. A member of the public may file a request with the prosecutor or file an application with the district court for the purpose of requesting that an inquest be held in a particular death including an officer involved death.
- (c) In a case where the coroner determines that [an officer was involved in the death of an individual] a death was an officer involved death and the investigation into the incident is complete, the coroner will call for an inquest, contact the appropriate prosecutor, and utilize the procedure set forth in Section 2.12.020(e) for selection of a presiding officer. The coroner shall also request all interested parties to submit their names and notification information for purposes of being notified of matters relating to the inquest.
- (d) If an inquest is called for an incident not involving an officer involved death, the coroner shall either designate an inquest hearing officer or a willing and qualified magistrate in Clark County to conduct and preside over the inquest.
- (e) The qualified magistrate in Clark County or inquest hearing officer shall be designated as the presiding officer.
- (f) Once a presiding officer is selected, he shall meet with the coroner and representatives of the prosecutor's office [and determine what evidence and witnesses will be needed in order to conduct an inquest] for the purpose of receiving an overview of the case only. In the case of an officer involved death, the presiding officer shall also appoint an inquest ombudsperson pursuant to the provisions of section 2.12.075 and determine the person who will represent the

- deceased's family. In the event there is a conflict among persons seeking to be the representative of the deceased's family, the presiding officer shall designate a single person to act as the family's representative.
- (g) The prosecutor will assist the presiding officer with the preparation for the inquest and work at the direction of the presiding officer. The prosecutor shall serve as a neutral presenter of facts. In this role, the prosecutor shall not act as an advocate for any of the interested parties.
- (h) [The presiding officer may also meet prior to the inquest with other interested individuals and obtain a list of witnesses who may be subpoenaed and obtain a list of questions that should be asked of witnesses at the inquest.]
  - After receiving the overview of the officer involved death case, the presiding officer shall call an initial pre-inquest conference to be attended by the coroner, the prosecutor, and the inquest ombudsperson. The coroner shall notify the person designated to represent the deceased's family and the officer or officers involved of their right to attend and participate in the pre-inquest conference along with their attorney representatives, if any. At the pre-inquest conference, the designated interested parties, and their attorneys, and the inquest ombudsperson shall be given access to the investigative files and coroner files relating to an officer involved death. The presiding officer shall rule on all confidentiality issues relating to the material in the files. The presiding officer will discuss a preliminary list of witnesses to be called at the inquest. The presiding officer may request further investigation of an officer involved death after consulting with interested parties.
  - Within 30 days of the initial pre-inquest conference, the presiding officer shall hold a final pre-inquest conference with the same participants for the purpose of determining how the inquest proceeding will be conducted, the scope of issues to be discussed, the scope of questioning, and the final witness list. In determining the admissibility of evidence, relevance shall be the key rule with an emphasis on percipient witnesses to ultimate issues of fact. In addition, the presiding officer shall significantly restrict the scope of collateral evidence that may be introduced at the inquest proceeding. The presiding officer will also set the time and place for holding the inquest. If the officer or officers in an officer involved death have separate attorney representatives, at the final pre-inquest conference, the presiding officer shall designate a single attorney representative who may ask questions at the inquest proceeding unless the presiding officer determines otherwise.
- (i) The presiding officer and the coroner shall obtain a copy of all records, exhibits or other evidence that they determine to be relevant to the matter under investigation.
- (j) The presiding officer and the coroner shall designate a time and place for holding of an inquest for an incident not involving an officer involved death. The presiding officer shall subpoena all necessary witnesses to testify at this inquest.
- (k) [The presiding officer shall designate a time and place for holding an inquest for an incident involving an officer involved death.] When a time and place for

holding an inquest into an officer involved death has been set by the presiding officer, the County Public Communications Office shall make arrangements for the inquest to be broadcast live on the County's government access television channel (CCTV) so long as such channel exists; however, the County Manager, in consultation with the Board, may direct the Office to preempt the live broadcast of an inquest proceeding so that the channel may be used for the live broadcast of other programming including, but not limited to, Board meetings and emergency- or disaster-related public information.

- (I) The presiding officer shall request that the Clark County jury commissioner select a panel of fifteen individuals, qualified to serve as an inquest [jury] panel, to assemble at the time and place previously designated for an inquest.
- (m) The presiding officer shall preside over the inquest and shall insure that the inquest is conducted as an investigatory <u>and fact finding</u> proceeding and not an adversarial proceeding. The presiding officer should substantially comply with the following procedure:
  - (1) Once an inquest is convened, the presiding officer shall select at random seven [jurors] persons from the [jury] panel to sit as an inquest [jury] panel. He shall then conduct [a voir dire] an examination of each [juror.] person. If any bias, prejudice or other good and sufficient reason manifests itself during the examination, the [juror] person shall be dismissed and another [juror] person shall be selected. Inquest panels shall be selected in accordance with state and federal law relating to jury selection, and the presiding officer shall take reasonable efforts to make the panel as diverse and representative of the community as possible.
  - At the inception of the proceedings, the presiding officer [shall identify all (2) interested parties that will be permitted to participate in the proceedings and shall make an opening statement indicating that an inquest is not an adversarial proceeding but a fact finding [procedure] proceeding and that the presiding officer, prosecutor and the fiurors members of the inquest panel will be the only individuals allowed to question witnesses. If the inquest proceeding relates to an officer involved death, the presiding officer shall also note that the inquest ombudsperson will be allowed to ask questions on behalf of the public, including the deceased's family, and an attorney representative will be allowed to ask questions on behalf of the officer or officers. [Any other interested parties must submit any proposed questions in writing to the presiding officer or the inquest clerk. After reviewing the proposed questions, the presiding officer may: (a) ask the witness the question; or (b) not ask the question. If the question is not asked, the presiding officer shall orally read the question into the record at the next available opportunity outside the presence of the jury. All unasked questions shall be orally read into the record before the conclusion of the proceedings.]
  - (3) The presiding officer in his discretion may allow witnesses who are not subpoenaed to testify, after he has reviewed such testimony outside the presence of the [iury.] inquest panel.

- (4) The examination of witnesses shall be under oath [but informal and the usual rules of evidence shall not apply] and conducted in accordance with the procedures established during the final pre-inquest conference. The presiding officer shall, however, have the authority to control the questioning of witnesses.
- (5) The exclusionary rule shall be invoked as to all witnesses that are subpoenaed or that may wish to testify.
- (6) The presiding officer shall admonish the [jury] <u>inquest panel</u> at each adjournment of the inquest not to:
  - (A) Converse among themselves or with anyone else on any subject connected with the inquest;
  - (B) Read, watch or listen to any report of or commentary on the inquest or any person connected with the inquest by any medium of information, including without limitation newspapers, television and radio; or
  - (C) [If they have not been charged, form] Form or express any opinion on any subject connected with the inquest until the [cause is] interrogatories have been finally submitted to them.
- (7) The presiding officer shall prepare the set of interrogatories for the inquest following discussion with the prosecutor, the inquest ombudsperson, and the designated interested parties and their attorney representatives. The set of interrogatories shall deal only with questions of fact and shall not deal with questions of fault or guilt.
- (8) The presiding officer shall have such other authority and power to conduct the inquest as he deems necessary to insure a fair and just hearing. However, the inquest must be conducted so that it is consistent with subsections [(M)] (m) (1) through [(6)] (7) of this section.
- (n) Anyone who unreasonably disrupts the inquest or fails to obey the orders of the presiding officer shall be found in contempt of the inquest and may be removed from the proceedings and/or fined one hundred dollars.
- (o) A single inquest may be held with respect to more than one death, where all of such deaths were occasioned by a common cause.

SECTION 5. Title 2, Chapter 2.12, section 2.12.090 of the Clark County Code is hereby amended as follows:

### 2.12.090 - Penalty for failure to attend as [juror] inquest panelist.

Every person selected as [an inquest juror] a inquest panelist who shall fail to appear without having a reasonable excuse [,] shall forfeit any sum not exceeding one hundred dollars to be recovered in any court of competent jurisdiction and paid into the county treasury.

SECTION 6. Title 2, Chapter 2.12, section 2.12.100 of the Clark County Code is hereby amended as follows:

### <u>2.12.100</u> – Oath of jurors when [jurors] inquest panelists attend.

Attending inquest <u>fjurors</u>] <u>panelists</u> shall be sworn by the presiding officer to <u>finquire</u> (1) who the dead person was; (2) when, where and by what means that person came to his death; (3) the circumstances attending the person's death; and (4) render a true verdict thereon according to the evidence] <u>determine questions of fact relating to the death that is the subject of the inquest in response to a set of interrogatories submitted to the inquest panel pursuant to section 2.12.140.</u>

SECTION 7. Title 2, Chapter 2.12, section 2.12.110 of the Clark County Code is hereby amended as follows:

# <u>2.12.110</u> – Fees of [jurors] inquest panelists —Expenses of transportation of [jury] panel.

- (a) Inquest [of jurors] panelists shall be entitled to receive for each day's service the sum of fifteen dollars upon certification [therefor] of such service to the county clerk by the coroner, such payments being audited, followed and paid as are other claims against the county.
- (b) When it is necessary for an inquest [jury] panel to travel a greater distance than one mile to view the remains of a dead person, or to the place where the inquest is to be held, the necessary and actual expenses entailed for the transportation of the [jury] inquest panel shall also be allowed, but not to exceed nineteen cents per mile only to the person providing the transportation. The claim for such expense shall be audited and paid as are other claims against the county, upon proper certification [therefor] by the county coroner.

SECTION 8. Title 2, Chapter 2.12, section 2.12.120 of the Clark County Code is hereby amended as follows:

# 2.12.120 – Witnesses—Summoning and examination—Adjournment of inquest.

- (a) The presiding officer is authorized to issue subpoenas for witnesses, returnable as he may direct, said subpoenas to be served by himself or such person as he may direct. Witnesses at an inquest shall be compensated as provided in law for witnesses required to attend in the courts of this state and such charge shall be a charge against the county.
- (b) The presiding officer may summon and examine as witnesses every person who, in his opinion, or in the opinion of the prosecutor, the inquest ombudsperson, or [any of the jurors,] the designated interested parties and their attorney representatives, has or may have any knowledge of the facts; and he may also summon a qualified surgeon or physician to inspect and examine the body, or hold a postmortem examination thereon or a chemist to make an analysis of the stomach or the tissues of the deceased and to give their professional opinions as to the cause of the death.

SECTION 9. Title 2, Chapter 2.12, section 2.12.130 of the Clark County Code is hereby amended as follows:

### 2.12.130 - Witnesses failing to attend—Punishment for contempt.

Any witness failing to obey a subpoena to attend an inquest [,] may be attached and fined for contempt [of such inquest jury,] in like manner as in a court of the justice of the peace.

SECTION 10. Title 2, Chapter 2.12, section 2.12.140 of the Clark County Code is hereby amended as follows:

# 2.12.140 - [Rendition of verdict—Certifications—Contents.] Jury interrogatories.

- (a) After hearing the testimony, the inquest [jury] panel shall deliberate in secret and [render their verdict and certify the same in writing, signed by them, and setting forth (1) the name of the deceased; (2) when, where, and by what means, he came to his death; (3) whether the death was by criminal means or whether the death was excusable or justifiable under the law; and (4) the name of the person causing the death, if factually known or reasonably established] answer a set of interrogatories relating to the death that is the subject of the inquest proceeding. The set of interrogatories shall be determined pursuant to section 2.12.080 and shall deal only with questions of fact and shall not deal with questions of fault or guilt. The findings on the set of interrogatories shall not be binding on the district attorney's office nor shall the findings have any preclusive effect in any future civil or criminal proceeding.
- (b) [If the inquest jury is unable to reach a unanimous verdict, the presiding officer shall instruct the inquest jury that a four to three majority is required for a verdict] When the inquest relates to an officer involved death and more than one officer is involved, the set of interrogatories must be answered for each individual officer.
- (c) The set of interrogatories shall provide for a separate delineation of the vote on each of the interrogatories.

SECTION 11. Title 2, Chapter 2.12, section 2.12.150 of the Clark County Code is hereby amended as follows:

# 2.12.150 – Testimony reduced to writing—Filed in the office of the coroner.

Testimony at such inquest shall be reduced to writing without delay, and the written document filed in the office of the coroner of Clark County. The coroner shall establish a procedure for handling requests by the public to view documents or obtain copies of documents relating to inquest proceedings and post such procedure on the County's internet website. The coroner's office may charge a fee for providing a copy of an inquest document so long as the fee is set in accordance with state law. The coroner, in a timely manner, shall place on the County's internet website a copy of the answered interrogatories of the inquest panel for each inquest proceeding. The coroner shall also ensure that the video of the inquest proceeding made by the County's Public Communications Office is posted on the County's internet website.

SECTION 12. Title 2, Chapter 2.12, section 2.12.160 of the Clark County Code, the language of which appears below, is hereby repealed.

# [2.12.160 - Action of prosecutor after inquest.

If the inquest jury finds that the person was killed by another under circumstances not excusable or justifiable in law, and the party committing the act is not already in custody, the prosecutor shall take such action as he deems necessary.]

SECTION 13. If any section of this ordinance or portion thereof is for any reason held invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, such holding shall not invalidate the remaining parts of this ordinance.

SECTION 14. All ordinances, parts of ordinances, chapters, sections, subsections, clauses, phrases or sentences contained in the Clark County Code in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

SECTION 15. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and the publication thereof by title only, together with the names of the County Commissioners voting for or against its passage, in a newspaper published in and having a general circulation in Clark County, Nevada, at least once a week for a period of two (2) weeks.

2010

day of

PROPOSED on the

. No. 6625 611 till			
PROPOSED BY:	Commissioner		
PASSED on the _	day of 2010.		
AYES:			
NAYS:			
ABSTAINING:			
ABSENT:			
	BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS CLARK COUNTY, NEVADA		
	BY: Rory Reid, Chairman		

ATTES	ST:	
County	y Clerk	
the	This ordinance shall be in force ar	nd effect from and after 2010.