

Maryland Pediatric Cancer Research Commission Meeting

Meeting #12 | September 1, 2026 | 2:00 – 3:00pm

Virtual Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees

Members in Attendance:

Pamela Williams
Michelle Urzynecok
John Shern
Curt Civin
Jeffrey Dome
Aziza Shad
Donald Small
Ruth Hoffman

Members Absent:

Beth Siever
Dana Christo
Kathryn Ruble
Brigitte Widemann
Piotr Walczak

Commission Staff:

Sadie Peters
Kate Natafgi

Additional Attendees:

Pansy Watson
Tyra Hudgens

1. Welcome, Agenda Review, and Roll Call

- a. The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by Co-chair Ruth Hoffman who provided an overview of the agenda.
- b. Roll was called. Eight Commission members were present, representing a quorum.

2. Update on Regulations

- a. Sadie Peters from the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) reported that the draft regulations concerning the Pediatric Cancer Fund and the grant application process have been approved by the Governor and submitted to the Division of State Documents. The regulations are expected to be published in the Maryland Register for a 30-day public comment period, after which MDH will review comments, make any necessary revisions

to the regulations, and resubmit for final publication. The process is anticipated to be completed by early November 2026.

3. Update on Peer Review Organization (PRO) Solicitation

- a. Sadie Peters reported that the PRO Request for Proposal (RFP) has been released and that submitted proposals are currently being evaluated by an evaluation panel. Contracting is anticipated to be completed in October, with the PRO expected to be in place and begin working with MDH and the Commission by approximately October 15, 2026.
- b. Sadie Peters reported that the Scientific Grant Request for Applications (RFA) subcommittee met twice to develop an evaluation rubric for the pediatric cancer research grant proposals, incorporating information and feedback provided by the subcommittee and Commission members. Katherine Natafagi reviewed the proposed rubric with the Commission members.
 - i. The rubric includes general application requirements, significance and impact of the proposed research, research approach and feasibility, investigator and team qualifications, collaborations and references, and adherence to Maryland-based research requirements.
 - ii. The rubric uses a 1–9 overall scoring scale, ranging from exceptional to very weak proposals, with reviewers also providing written comments. The criteria are not weighted, allowing reviewers to consider the overall strength and potential impact of each proposal.
 - iii. Commission members discussed whether individual evaluation criteria should be weighted and agreed that an overall score without weighted sections would provide appropriate flexibility for reviewers. Members also discussed the role of the scoring descriptions as guidance rather than rigid requirements. The Commission reached consensus that applicants should receive their overall score and a summary of the review, but not the detailed evaluation rubric or individual section scores.
- c. Commission members were asked to review the rubric and current draft RFA closely and provide any additional suggested revisions before the materials are finalized.

4. Commission Recruitment

- a. The Commission discussed the reappointment process for members whose terms are expiring and noted that, unlike some commissions, the Commission does not have statutory holdover provisions. Members whose terms expire may therefore attend meetings as members of the public, but may not vote unless they are reappointed. Members were encouraged to begin the reapplication process promptly, particularly those who are not affiliated with an institution expected to receive a grant. The Commission also discussed potential conflicts of interest for members whose institutions may receive grant awards and the need to disclose such awards as part of the reappointment process.

- b. The Commission discussed the need to recruit candidates for upcoming vacancies, including two scientist positions, and agreed to establish a small recruitment subcommittee. Jack Shern and Ruth Hoffman agreed to coordinate recruitment efforts, with other members invited to participate. The group will identify potential candidates for specific Commission membership categories and reach out to prospective nominees. Members also discussed beginning recruitment efforts for future vacancies in advance to allow sufficient time for the appointment process.

5. Next Steps

- a. Jack Shern and Ruth Hoffman agreed to coordinate recruitment efforts and solicit candidate names.
- b. Members whose terms are expiring were encouraged to reapply as soon as appropriate.
- c. Commission members will also review the evaluation rubric and latest draft RFA and provide comments or suggested revisions to MDH.

6. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

7. Adjournment

John Shern moved that the meeting be adjourned. Jeffrey Dome seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm.