

Office of Cemetery Oversight
Advisory Council On Cemetery Operations

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 26, 2024

9:30 AM

Virtual Sign-on Information:

Sign on information: Join with Google Meet- <https://meet.google.com/ean-zoxr-zgt>

-Up to 250 participants

Meeting ID: <https://meet.google.com/ean-zoxr-zgt>

Phone Number/ (US)+1 415-737-9563

To call in: Dial PIN:991 991 730#

HOUSEKEEPING

COMAR 09.01.11.03, <http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/comarhtml/09/09.01.11.03.htm>

.03 Public Attendance.

- A. The public is invited to attend and observe any open session of the unit within the Department.
- B. Except in instances when the unit expressly invites public testimony, questions, comments, or other forms of public participation, or when public participation is otherwise authorized by law, a member of the public attending an open session may not actively participate in the session.

1. Roll Call/Quorum Announced

Staff Present:

Deborah Rappazzo – Executive Director

Matthew Venuti – Assistant Attorney General

Dreama Anderson – Investigator

Matthew McKinney – Policy and Appointments

Sarah McDermott – Assistant Commissioner

Council Members

Frank Porter, Chair

Mike Bennett

www.labor.maryland.gov

David Zinner
Ron Pearcey
Walter Tegeler
Bruce Hultquist
Chris Palmer
Yvonne Fisher
Craig Huff
Erich March

Guests

Candy Warden, Friends of Rosa Bonheur
Glen Easton, Garden of Remembrance Park in Clarksburg, MD
John Stierhoff, Esq.

Staff Absent:

Leila Whitley – Administrative Aide/Licensing Specialist
Lucas Manes – Financial Compliance Administrator

2. Meeting Called to Order at 9:32 am by Chair

3. Approval of Today's Agenda

4. Approval of April 10, 2024, Minutes Approved.

5. Executive Director's Report

- Introduction

Executive Director, Rappazzo, currently is doing all renewals and payments, etc. while employee is out of the office.

- Getting to know our Advisory Council Members:
 - Council Member Huff

Council Member Huff has been in the cemetery business for more than twenty years, after previously being involved in retail. Mr. Huff gets joy from helping families. He is one of eight children. His mother never worked outside the home. Mr. Huff's father worked for the Baltimore County Police Department. Council Member Huff has three adult children, one working in deathcare, one working in health care and one is a banker. He also has three grandchildren. He notes that he comes from a religious family. Currently, Council Member Huff

is the general manager for Moreland Park Cemetery in Parkville, Maryland, which is just over 100 acres. He was also the past President of Maryland Cemetery Association. He continues to stay in contact with Cemeterians from other states for updates in the deathcare industry. He stated that he fell into this career by accident. Council Member Huff stated that Moreland Park Cemetery does not conduct any green/natural burials at this time. Moreland Park is a private cemetery owned by a family. It has iron gates with two castles, which are used for photographs on the outside. His office is approximately a mile away.

- Council Member March

Mr. March got into family business of deathcare after college. He originally planned to go to law school. In 1982, Council Member March bought out the other two previous partners of the cemetery. He is the Executive Officer of eight funeral homes. King Memorial Park (KMP) is the largest predominantly African- American Cemetery in the country. KMP is 150 acres and performs approximately 3000 ceremonies per year. The cemetery offers the use of executive coaches when family members exceed the limousine capacity, which holds thirteen. KMP has been performing green/natural burials from the beginning. The Cemetery has a new special section dedicated to first responders. Every October KMP hosts a Founders Day Program.

He has created the only grief counseling center in Maryland, founded in 1980, and is free of charge to all. Two years ago, his family built a \$15,000,000 structure on the original funeral home site. He created programs that are focused on children which is funded through Public Health School Congressional Foundations. Council Member March's son has been nominated twice for Grammys for children's music (DJ Willy Wild). Parents are buried at KMP in the mausoleum.

- Council Members Pearcey, Chair Porter and Executive Director Rappazzo will provide their bios at our next meeting.

- Ethics forms (Financial Disclosure) have been completed by all Council Members.
- Reappointment applications for several Council Members have been completed and received. These documents will now be presented to Commissioner Dove and Secretary Wu for approval.
- Council vacancy – Need a Consumer Member and a Crematory Representative.

6. Old Business

- None

7. New Business

- The OCO is schedule to move sometime this year. No date has been provided at this time.
- Hoping to get a temporary employee in the next few months.
- Executive Director, Rappazzo went to her first Bill Signing in April. There was a total of 12 pages of bills being signed with OCO being the fourth from last. The Bill Signing was for updating the burial transit permit. Next year's Bill Signing will be extended to staff and Council Members. Next time working on

8. Investigator's Report

New complaints (4/9/24 to 9/25/24)

Memorial order-6

Encroachment-2

Displaced memorial-1

Memorial conformity-1

General maintenance-4

Damaged memoria-3

Memorial believed to be included with PreNeed purchase-1

Encroachmen-1

Certificate of ownership-1

Unable to get information to complete an in-urnment-1

Memorial inscription-5 (2 with foreign language)

Fees, Reissuance of certificate of ownership-1

Mausoleum Disrepair/Conditions-3

Mis-burial legal Issue-1

Record Keeping-1

Contract Cancellation-2

In disagreement with a PreNeed inscription-1

PreNeed memorial in storage-1

Pet/Human desecration-52

Beginning-76

Plus **Total New-36**

Less **Total Closed-46**

Remaining open-66 (of which 52 are Pet/Human desecration)=14

9. Financial Compliance Administrator's Report

Executive Director Rappazzo provided a brief overview. No one has utilized the new distribution method. Most companies' year end is in December. But there are a few companies that use a different month. Any company not providing their trust reports for past and current years will be pursued by OCO.

10. Licensing Specialist's Report

Since June, the office processed 552 applications consisting of new and renewal applications (Sales Counselors, Registered Cemeterians, Cemeteries, Crematories, Registered Crematory Operators and Burial Goods Businesses).

Starting July 1, 2024, an increase per contract fee of \$30 will be applied to all retail contracts over \$250.

Executive Director Rappazzo continues to review all issues that pertain to licensure (Criminal history, SDAT standing, etc.) prior to approval.

11. Legislative Update

AAG Venuti continues to work with Department of Morticians and Funeral Directors to develop regulations for Natural Organic Reduction and Alkaline Hydrolysis.

Legislation submitted in 2023 for Pet Cemeteries, Notice of Failure to Respond and Fee increase have been signed by Governor Moore and have become law.

New proposed legislation for the 2025 session has been submitted and awaiting approval (Vital Records to take ownership of Disinterment/Reinterment Same Cemetery Burial Notices).

Last year's bill for OCO's Abandoned Cemetery Fund will not be repropoed this year.

Council Member Zinner has been involved with an outside organization to develop and propose legislation for the upcoming session that includes Abandoned/ Neglected, Disinterment Criminal statute, increased penalties for desecration and obligation of the court to approve cemetery sales.

12. Public Comment

No comments

13. Adjournment Motion passed at 11:24 am

*The starred items may be deferred until the next 2024 meeting



DIVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSING
Office of Cemetery Oversight
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***A portion of this meeting may be closed pursuant to the General Provisions Article
[Annotated Code of Maryland, §3-305\(b\)](#)