 DIVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSING
Office of Cemetery Oversight

500 N. Calvert Street, 3rd Floor

Baltimore, MD 21202

OFFICE OF CEMETERY OVERSIGHT

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON CEMETERY OPERATIONS

MINUTES

DATE: February 27, 2020

TIME: 10:10 a.m. – 12:25 p.m.

PLACE: Maryland Department of Labor

 500 N. Calvert Street

 3rd Floor Conference Room

 Baltimore, Maryland 21202

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

 Frank Porter, Chair

 J. Michael Bennett

 Yvonne Fisher

 Craig Huff

 Bruce Hultquist

 Erich March

 Ronald Pearcey

 David Zinner

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

 Erin Brooks

 Colleen Perret

 Walter Tegeler

**STAFF PRESENT**

 Deborah Rappazzo- Director, Office of Cemetery Oversight

 John Hart- Assistant Attorney General, Office of Cemetery Oversight

 Jay Wilson- Financial Compliance Administrator, Office of Cemetery Oversight

 Dreama Anderson- Investigator, Office of Cemetery Oversight

**STAFF ABSENT**

 Leila Whitley- Administrative Aide, Office of Cemetery Oversight

**VISITORS**

 Richard Cody- Resthaven Memorial Gardens

 Aaron Smoaks- Smoaks Memorials

 Ken Sigman- Assistant Attorney General, Home Improvement Commission

**CALL TO ORDER**

 Acting Chair Porter called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

**MINUTES**

 The minutes from January 23, 2020 were approved.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

* **Memorial Dealers**

When an outside memorial dealer is requesting lot information from a cemetery to update a

memorial they should clarify the relationship of the memorial purchaser.

* **Reinterments**

Prior to OCO, the State’s Attorney’s Office issued an Order to Exhume for Reinterment, which was sent to a repository, but no information was archived. An Order to Exhume required lot owner notice and permission, unless accompanied by a subpoena.

* **Abandoned Cemeteries**

Anchor of Hope Cemetery has been abandoned, first burial in 1890, and bay erosion is destroying the retainer wall. The State is working with Mr. Dean to remediate retainer wall. OCO referred Mr. Dean to the State’s Attorney’s Office and Preservation to Protect Burial Sites.

Brewer’s Hill Cemetery is another abandoned cemetery. However, the State Archeologists are involved. The State’s Attorney’s Office contacted the State Archeologists Office that has ground penetrating equipment.

* **Mural**

An artist has contacted the OCO in order to offer a free mural for a cemetery. If anyone is interested, please contact the Director.

* **Coronavirus**

Coronavirus was discussed generally at the meeting. The feedback from industry members was that some cemeteries had prior training on mass casualty events from organizations outside the OCO and that the office would look to public health and emergency management agencies for future guidance on the role of cemeteries during the pandemic.

* **Burial Transit Documentation**

For a future meeting the OCO Advisory Council recommended inviting a representative(s) from the Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors to review different types of burial transit documentation for clarification.

**INVESTIGATOR’S REPORT**

 11 Complaints from January, predominately pertaining to uninstalled memorials.

**FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE**

Since our last meeting: reviewed 2 cemeteries for financial stability and 2 balance sheets with positive asset/liability status.

All cemeteries in good standing: some financial statements are pending awaiting Executive Director’s approval. Last year, 3-4 cemeteries were in a negative asset/liability position for last year only. Negative financial stability findings require recommendation by the OCO Director and counsel.

In review, line items on all trust reports and balance sheets are reviewed for inaccuracies. One cemetery issue that we are resolving is to get all cemeteries notified of what is needed to be updated. Pre-need contracts considered assets/merchandise, which determines the amount in trust fund required to be adequate to purchase the merchandise. Pre-need contracts also help to determine viability by looking at gross amount of fund, which includes the deduction for merchandise delivered during the year.

**LICENSING SPECIALIST**

 Nothing to report

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Senate Bill 104: Office of Cemetery Oversight- Cemetery Financial Statement—unfavorable report by Finance Committee, bill failed.

House Bill 243: Cemeteries- Perpetual Care-Distribution From Perpetual Care Trust Fund. Passed with amendments out of the House (139-0) and sent to the Senate.

Senate Bill 483: Cemeteries-Perpetual Care- Distribution From Perpetual Care Trust Fund. Cross-filled with HB 243. Hearing scheduled for 3/12/20 at 1:00 pm.

House Bill 1512: Historic African American Cemeteries Preservation Fund. To be administered by the Department of Planning and accounted for by the Comptroller’s Office. Per the bill, funding would come from the General Fund.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

**NEW BUSINESS**

 One of our registrant cemeteries located near Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI) is working with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to address their geese issue by trying to move the geese to a different location.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

 None

**Meeting adjourned 12:25**