

Office of Cemetery Oversight
Advisory Council On Cemetery Operations

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 10, 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

Council Members

Frank Porter

Mike Bennett

David Zinner

Ron Pearcey

www.labor.maryland.gov

Walter Tegeler
Bruce Hultquist
Christopher Palmer
Yvonne Fisher

Guests

Jennifer Johnson
Candy Warden

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 February 28, 2024–Minutes Approved with necessary corrections.

5. Executive Director's Report

- Introduction

Updating forms, 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-Pending
- Council Member, Zinner:

In 1963 his mother “voluntold” him to work with a cemetery, then volunteered to investigate a cemetery. He then became involved with Mt. Lebanon, where he developed an appreciation for communication. Council Member Zinner joined Office of Cemetery Oversight Advisory Council approximately 12 years ago. Council Member Zinner has written a 12-week course on green burial and management, perpetual care, analysis of perpetual care funds. Council Member Zinner is currently working on several projects:

- St Peter's Cemetery- Working closely with Jennifer Johnson to get the Catholic Cemetery. Advisory Council Member, Hultquist has been essential with assisting with the project.
- Council Member Tegeler:

Council Member Tegeler operates a family monument business. The business have been in his family for five generations, at the same location since 1897. He and his family still do all their own work, as well as help to take care of some of the smaller cemeteries. Currently, the business has two locations: one in Woodlawn (original location) and the other in Loblein. The Loblein location was started by Schmidt, then to Lobleins, then to Matthews and then Tegeler. The company sets memorials at all cemeteries within Maryland and other states for Maryland consumers. Council Member Tegeler has been a pilot since 1979, owns plane and sometimes fly memorials to other locations. He has been flying since age 14. He can look at granite and determine where the granite came from, how it was quarried and where it originated. Tegeler is one of the oldest companies in Maryland. The company has completed memorials for many Fire and Police departments around Maryland. The company is now preforming opening and closing of graves for many cemeteries.

- Council Member Huff will provide his bio at our next meeting.
- Reappointment document requests have been sent out and need to be in before September 2024 for review by our Commissioner and Secretary.
- Application, ethics form (Financial Disclosure) and online ethics form (due by 4/30/24). ethics.public@maryland.gov. If you have any questions, you can call 410-260-7770.
- Council vacancy- Need a Consumer Member and a Crematory Representative.
- Budget reviewed:
 - The Office of Cemetery Oversight is Special Funded.
 - A graph showing current and past contract fees was reviewed. The dip of revenue to expense ratio is concerning. Council wants to see the impact of the fee increase to \$30. Jumps in expenditure are based on projections by DMB. Moving, new equipment and furniture contributing to increases. Activity FY jumps are due to renewal cycles (every 2 years). The increase will go into effect at the end of April 2024 in FY 2024, but it will be retroactive. \$30 per contract for each contract over \$250. This increase doesn't include crematory contracts.
 - Notification to licensees will be sent out via email as well as, being posted on the OCO's website for all legislative and regulatory changes. Recommended notifying licensees in 60 days. The regulation will go into effect on 4/30/24. The fee we be effective on July 1, 2024, for FY 2025.
 - Question asked by Council Member March-Was something sent to licensees to notify them that public comments were open? No, it is not required. It would be more helpful to pay fees monthly or quarterly. Unfortunately, the Office is not

staffed to do this frequency, however Executive Director, Rappazzo. will inquire.
Some individuals are still sending checks with the online payment system.

- All applications are being scanned and uploaded in 2 places. However, there is still a lot of scanning to be done before our move. An independent company has been contracted to do scanning.

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.
- Yesterday Executive Director, Rappazzo went to her first Bill Signing. 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

Old Open Complaints	6
New Complaints	
Memorial order	8
Burial Location	4
Maintenance	2
Performance of Contract	1
Legal Issue-Mis-burial	2
Legal Issue-Telephone spoofing	1
Rosa Bonheur	42 (10 last report) =52 total

Council Member Zinner provided information regarding pet cemetery complaints; ownership is buried in LLC. Families that have pets and family members are at risk of losing the cemetery. Owners of the cemetery went to State’s Attorney’s office to obtain approval for human disinterments/reinterments. Approval was obtained, but families were not notified. It was clear that professionals did not do the work. Executive Director Rappazzo and Counsel Venuti met with the State’s Attorney’s office, however, the approval granted was done within the letter of the law.

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

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

11. Legislative Update

AAG Venuti updated the Council regarding the OCO's pending regulation amendments. Specifically, regulations regarding failure to respond to a communication of the OCO within 30 days and pet cemeteries will be published on 4/29/24. Green Deathcare Options Act has been sent to the Governor for signature. The Abandoned Cemetery Fund did not pass. Implementation date July 2026 may change, but Mr. Zinner feels that the date should remain the same when re-submitted next year. Bill had great support this year. Jennifer Johnson is willing to move information forward next year, as she is already part of CPB. Crematory set back requirements, study on deathcare and funeral environmental impact, and protection of African American burial grounds did not pass.

12. Public Comment

- Jennifer Johnson- Stated that St. Peter Cemetery Established in 1851 closed for burials in 1959. Students at Towson University are working on an African American section in the cemetery to provide a Ground Penetration Results survey. The cemetery is predominantly Irish. Maryland State and Trader Foundation has been instrumental in helping. The cemetery is located at 1301 Moreland Avenue near Carver High School. Ms. Johnson got involved with the cemetery when her mother requested that she find her grandmother's grave. She has been able to trace family history from slavery to freedom. Unfortunately, the Church had no information. Some of the cemetery records are currently located at the Jonah House. She worked with the Baltimore Historical Society too obtain information too. Her biggest hurdle to get the project up and running was getting no's, overcoming no's to press forward. Ms. Johnson formed the group, Friends of St. Peter Cemetery which has grown to approximately 50 helping individuals. The group now has a Facebook page. Also, PRINCE has been involved with helping the group with cleanup, which hopefully will continue. Ms. Johnson is the lead volunteer and has also recruited her mother.

- Candy Warden- Stated that the Rosa Bonheur Cemetery started in 1930 as a pet cemetery. It is located on Washington Blvd. across from a commercial cemetery. The cemetery is owned by Gross, Boyers, Potees, and Green, Tertel, Rewhur, Levy. There are a lot of volunteers that still come out to care for the cemetery. There are 8 people buried there before 1979 and since that time it has grown to 24 human burials. However, there is now some questions of what has happened to their remains. Families that have loved ones buried at the cemetery are checking daily to see if anyone is being disinterred/reinterred. The volunteers were out this past Sunday and Monday. Members have met with cemetery owners for the last 3 years. In the last of the 3 meetings, it was revealed there is a plan to develop the land. It is believed that Howard County Cemetery law states that development requires notification to the Howard County Cemetery Preservation Board established by the Cemetery Preservation Act 1993. A Senator told the previous owner that if sold, then the cemetery could not be used for development. Currently, pet cemeteries are required to be registered with the Office of Cemetery Oversight, until October 2023.
- Next meeting May 23, 2024, at 9:30 with bios by Craig Huff and Eric March

13. Adjournment Motion passed at 11:53 am

*The stated items may be deferred until the May 2024 meeting

***A portion of this meeting may be closed pursuant to the General Provisions Article [Annotated Code of Maryland, §3-305\(b\)](#)