
Office of Cemetery Oversight
Advisory Council On Cemetery Operations

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 26, 2023

10:00 AM

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

-Up to 250 participants

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

Phone Numbers

To call in: Dial +1415-737-9563 PIN: 991991730#

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

Council Members

Frank Porter

Bruce Hultquist

Craig Huff

Ron Percy

David Zinner

Yvonne Fisher

Chris Palmer

Erich March

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Staff Present

Deborah Rappazzo- Executive Director, Office of Cemetery Oversight
John Hart-Assistant Attorney General, Office of Cemetery Oversight
Danielle Anderson-Web and Outreach Coordinator
Dreama Anderson-Investigator, Office of Cemetery Oversight
Matthew McKinney-Legislative Appointments, Occupational & Professional Licensing

Staff Absent

Leila Whitley- Licensing Specialist

Visitors-None

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting Called to Order by Chairperson: Frank Porter, Advisory Council, Chair
At 10:05am

APPROVALS

Agenda: Approval of Today's Agenda-Read and Approved

Minutes: Approval of December 1, 2022, Minutes- Read and Approved

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Discussion:

- a. The Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors' ("BOMFD") Executive Director was to attend today's meeting but was unable to do so. The Executive Directors for the OCO and BOMFD will begin working on Consumer Brochure. Danielle Anderson is to review the brochure, which will be amended and sent to Commissioner, then to BOMFD.
- b. Executive Director Rappazzo has been finalizing year end reports and will provide findings at our next meeting.

Old Business

Discussion:

- a. On-Line Licensing: Executive Director Rappazzo advised the Council that on-line licensing is still moving forward, and a prototype has been designed. No further updates are available currently.
- b. Cemetery Restoration Project: Executive Director Rappazzo advised the Council

that the trainer's role has been filled and in mid-February, incarcerated persons (IPs) from two facilities will be selected for this training. The first group of IPs will be from a men's facility and the 2nd group of IPs will be from a women's facility.

The training for each group consists of 6-8 weeks of classroom training and 1 week of off-site hands-on training at a local cemetery. During the training sessions the IPs will be trained on how to perform cemetery & memorial cleaning and restoration, etc. At the conclusion of training, the trainer will present the IPs with a certificate of completion.

- c. Preservation and Restoration Initiative for Neglected Cemetery Entities (PRINCE) Project: Council Member Zinner provided an update to the Council regarding the PRINCE Project. He stated that IP work crews from multiple facilities have been involved in the cleanup of wood and trees at 4 cemeteries. The PRINCE Project is being funded by a \$10,000 Trader Foundation Grant. The IPs are loving it and within 2 years of release, they will be fully employable in the industry. The Cemetery Restoration Project is a partnership between the Department of Labor (Office of Cemetery Oversight and Workforce Development and Adult Learning), Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) and the Coalition to Protect Maryland Burials. The PRINCE Steering Committee will have its first meeting soon. Council Member March is interested in being on the Steering Committee.

New Business

Discussion:

- a. Electronic Check Payments: Yesterday the Executive Director attended a meeting with a group of individuals from an Automated Clearing House (ACH) payment provider to discuss how individuals and businesses should be able to go online to process payments by check/ credit card. There will not be a fee to pay by checks, but unsure of fees for credit card payments. New applications will still be processed manually with an invoice issued. Applications would not be processed until payment has been received and the application (initial and/or renewal) has been approved. This payment method will make paying for their initial and/or renewal application fee much easier and more efficient.
- b. PDF Licensing: Executive Director Rappazzo stated that the next step will be PDF licensing. This is where licensees will be able to print their own licenses once they have been reviewed and approved. No worries, mailing licenses will not go away

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since there are a few of our licensees that are not electronic. Executive Director Rappazzo hopes to have an update by our next meeting.

- c. Federal Trade Commission (FTC)-Funeral Rule impact: FDC Funeral Rule is currently under review by Executive Director Rappazzo. At our next meeting, she will address any areas of concern that may effect on our licensees, etc.
- d. The Village Movement: Council Member Palmer is very active with the Village Movement that coordinates critical services for older adults. The group discusses topics such as death and dying, decluttering and death cleaning. Meetings are held monthly, and some meetings are open to the public. The organization was started in Boston for older people 55+ to age in their homes. The Village Movement is a non-profit ran by volunteers. There are approximately 400 Village Movement groups nationwide.

INVESTIGATOR'S REPORT

Discussion: Investigator Anderson presented her complaint update to the Council.

- a. There were 21 new complaints received since our last meeting (18-Memorials, 3 Burial site Maintenance Issues)
- b. There are still 10 old complaints that remain open awaiting information.
- c. There have been 7 old complaints that have closed since our last meeting.

FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Discussion:

- a. Executive Director Rappazzo noted that she is in the final step to hire a new employee for the vacant Financial Compliance Administrator's role. She hopes to be able to introduce the new employee at our next meeting.

LICENSING SPECIALIST REPORT

Discussion:

- a. Executive Director Rappazzo will defer the Licensing Specialist's report until next month, since she is not present. However, a request for a copy of our licensees' general price list and rules and regulations will be sent out mid-February, as some businesses change prices in January.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Discussion: Presented by John Hart-Assistant Attorney General, Office of Cemetery Oversight

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- a. Currently there are not any Bills that have been filled in the 2023 Legislative Session that affect cemeteries, burial goods businesses, and crematories. However, that could change at any time.
 - b. Discussion of Legislative Policy- Has not yet been received from the new administration. Upon receipt, the new policy will be forwarded to the Advisory Council. At this point, continue to follow the same policy from last year, until further notice. If testifying, you must make it clear that you are testifying personally and not as a Council member. Prior to testifying, you will need to send a notice to Executive Director Rappazzo wherein you provide the number of the Bill (s) that you will be testifying on and a statement of your testimony. Once received she will provide it to the Department of Labor's Legislative Liaison.
 - c. Council Member Zinner posed a question to Counsel Hart, "Is it possible to get on the agenda for next meeting to propose ideas for next year for modifications for current legislation?" Previously proposals were sent and only one was selected by Secretary. Council would like the policy update regarding policy for proposals. Response was provided by Counsel Hart that proposals can be done if Council would like to do so. Ideas from Council are advanced to the Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing and then advanced to Secretary for review and approval. If the Council would like to have a meeting to discuss legislation for next year it should be done in an open meeting format. This would allow for ideas to be discussed with the Council and may have some public comments as well. The role of Council is to advise Executive Director of concerns within the industry. Council Member Zinner will write suggestions for the Council to consider and contribute. Be mindful of open meeting act as it applies to email and discussions with other Council members.
 - d. Andrew Fulginiti is continuing as the Legislative Liaison. Council recommended inviting Legislative Liaison to future meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- a. None

COUNCIL CONCERNS

- a. None
- b. Council Member March announced the 50th Anniversary of King Memorial Park this year and he will be providing upcoming events in the very near future. He also stated that Roberta's House which is a grief counseling center that is currently overwhelmed by the needs of the community.
- c. The next OCO meeting will be virtual and held on February 23, 2023.

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- d. The Advisory Council meeting in March will be in person. However, Council Members will need to notify the Executive Director if they are planning to attend so that parking can be arranged. However, there will be a virtual link for those unable to attend.
 - e. It has been confirmed that the Maryland Department of Labor will be moving to 100 South Charles Street later this year, for which there will hopefully be available Agency parking.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was moved and seconded for adjournment at 11:04 am.

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