DIVISION OF

OCCUPATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSING

Office of Cemetery Oversight

1100

N. Eutaw Street, 5th

Floor

Baltimore, MD 2120

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OFFICE OF CEMETERY OVERSIGHT

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON CEMETERY OPERATIONS

MINUTES

DATE: September 22, 2022

TIME: 10:10 a.m. – 11:40 a.m.

PLACE**: *Meeting ID:***[https:// meet.google.com/ ean-zoxr-zgt](https://meet.google.com/ean-zoxr-zgt)

*Phone Numbers*

*(US)+1 415-737-9563*

PIN: 991 991 730#

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Frank Porter, Chair

Rebecca Edmiston (Bailey)

J. Michael Bennett

Bruce Hultquist

Yvonne Fisher

Erich March

David Zinner

# MEMBERS ABSENT

Craig Huff

Ronald Pearcey

Walter Tegeler

# STAFF PRESENT

Kausar Syed – Deputy Commissioner of Occupational & Professional Licensing

Deborah Rappazzo - Director, Office of Cemetery Oversight

Kim Ward - Assistant Attorney General, Office of Cemetery Oversight

Leila Whitley - Administrative Aide, Office of Cemetery Oversight

Dreama Anderson - Investigator, Office of Cemetery Oversight

**STAFF ABSENT**

N/A

**VISITORS**

Rachel Maynor - Funeral Consumer Alliance of America

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

Roll call was conducted by Chair Porter with 7 Council members in attendance and 3 Council members absent. Quorum fulfilled.

Entire staff and counsel were also present.

**MINUTES**

The minutes from February 24, 2022 were read and approved.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Director Rappazzo emailed a document with the number of permits (for the businesses) and the number of registrants (for the individuals) to the council members. That document shows an approximate dollar amount the Office of Cemetery Oversight (OCO) will receive for licenses. The document does not show any amounts for contract fees.

OCO has three full-time permanent employees and is still in need of a Financial Compliance Administrator, which is a part-time, contractual position that has not yet been filled. The reports are being reviewed internally by a Certified Public Accountant.

Director Rappazzo reported that the revenue collected in the past was higher every other year, due to one company that previously had all their licensees dually licensed. That has changed in the past year and a half because that company is no longer dually licensed.

The new IT system is currently in the development/implementation phrase. Currently the OCO has not yet been incorporated into the development/implementation phrase. In the interim, the OCO has been working with IT to develop and on-line licensing program. The prototype has been submitted for development. This process may be ready in the next few weeks for testing.

There is a new Executive Director for the Board of Morticians. Director Rappazzo will be reaching out to this individual to introduce herself and to discuss updating the consumer pamphlet.

Council Member Zinner called the Board of Morticians regarding a form that was incorrect. He was informed to file a complaint. Director Rappazzo mentioned that a re-vamping of that office is taking place currently.

**OLD BUSINESS**

The prototype for the online licensing should be ready for testing in the next few weeks.

Cemetery Restoration: there are many steps in restoring a cemetery. A couple of steps could be improved training, and writing a lesson plan.

The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services has agreed to send landscaping teams to maintain a cemetery located in Baltimore County. This agreement will continue for 1 year.

Chair Porter inquired about the status from a previous Advisory Council meeting when Commissioner Morgan mentioned University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) students might be able to help in the office (Occupational and Professional Licensing). (That discussion is deferred to later scheduled Advisory Council meeting.)

# NEW BUSINESS

Council Member March announced that October 28, 2022 is National First Responders Day. He will be sending invitations to council members to attend the ceremony at the Garden of Heroes at King Memorial Park.

There was a brief discussion of mass casualties and mass deaths at the beginning of COVID-19. Council Member March mentioned Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Teams (DMORTs) which is a response plan for mass casualties for funeral directors. Council Member Fisher mentioned that in New York, they had vacant land where they buried mass casualty bodies.

# INVESTIGATOR’S REPORT

Investigator Anderson stated the number one complaint is memorials which is due to COVID-19. COVID-19 has caused major delays in customers receiving their memorials on time, that they have ordered for their loved ones. These delays are not unique to Maryland, but around the country.

Council Member Bennett informed the attendees that groups that are in Canada are buying up quarries and shutting them down, setting the price high for granite. This cost increase will not only affect businesses, but consumers as well.

Council Member March informed the attendees, cemeteries are facing an increase in cremations as opposed to burials.

Council Member Bennett informed the attendees that a cremation ceremony can last anywhere from thirty minutes to two hours. If you have two or three cremations a day, that can consume all or most of the cemetery’s day.

**FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE**

An overview of the Perpetual Care Trusts and the Preneed Burial Trusts reports will be deferred to a future Advisory Council meeting.

# LICENSING SPECIALIST

Ms. Whitley informed the council she is continuing to send out renewals for businesses and individuals by email and by mail. More and more licensees are responding, but there are a few that multiple follow-ups are being completed.

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Legal Counsel Ward is sitting in for Legal Counsel Hart. The ELF System is being updated. It may take until October before it is operational and November or December until the Failure to Respond regulations become final regulations.

Director Rappazzo stated OCO commission has been extended until 06/30/2032, due to the passage of legislation in 2021.

Also, congratulations went out to Council Member Zinner. He wrote a curriculum training people to operate and work in green cemeteries. Council Member Zinner extended an invite to all members to attend an overview of the program. More information will be forthcoming.

# COUNCIL CONCERNS

None.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

# ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting is scheduled for October 27, 2022.

There was a motion and second and the Council voted to adjourn.