

Office of Cemetery Oversight
Advisory Council On Cemetery Operations

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 24, 2024

10:00 AM

In-Person Information:

Meeting Location: Mount Olivet Cemetery-Chapel

515 S. Market Street, Frederick, MD 21701

(The Chapel is located behind the Francis Scott Key Memorial Statue)

Phone #: 301-662-1164

Virtual Sign-on Information:

Sign on information: Join with Google Meet- [meet.google.com/ ean-zoxr-zgt](https://meet.google.com/ean-zoxr-zgt)

-Up to 250 participants

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

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

To call in: **Dial PIN:** 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

Council Members Present

Frank Porter

Bruce Hultquist

David Zinner

Chris Palmer

Craig Huff

Ron Pearcey
Yvonne Fisher

Absent Council Members

Erich March
Watler Tegeler
J. Michael Bennett

Staff Members Present

Deborah Rappazzo-Executive Director
Matthew Venuti- Assistant Attorney General
John Dove-O&P Commissioner of Occupational & Professional Licensing
Dreama Anderson-Investigator

Absent Staff Members

Leila Whitley-Licensing Specialist
Lucas Manes-Financial Compliance Officer

Guests

Clarence Boston-DMV Cremation Center
Ted Foreman-Mt. Olivet Board President
Friends of Mt. Olivet-Stoners and Fixers

2. Meeting Called to Order by Chairperson: Council Chair Porter at 10:09 am

3. Approval of Today’s Agenda-Unanimously Approved. Motion by Council Member Palmer, Seconded by Council Member Zinner

4. Approval of September 26, 2024, Minutes–Unanimously Approved. Motion by Council Member Palmer, Seconded by Council Member Zinner

5. Executive Director’s Report

1. Introduction-Executive Director, Rappazzo, welcomed everyone to the Advisory Council meeting and extended a thank you to the staff of Mount Olivet Cemetery for hosting the meeting.

2. Reappointment letters were presented by Executive Director, Rappazzo to Council Member Zinner and Council Member Huff

3. Commissioner Dove, Occupational and Professional Licensing, delivered to the Advisory Council Chair, on behalf of Secretary Portia Wu, Secretary of Labor, a Certificate of Recognition to Chair Porter for his 27 years of service on the Council.

Chair Porter addressed the Office and the Council Members by stating that it has been a pleasure to serve on the Commission, but it is time for him to say goodbye. His last meeting will be in December. However, he will continue to virtually attend meetings when available.

Additional comments were shared by members of the Council:

Council Member Zinner thanked Chair Porter for keeping the Council focused and on topic. Council Member Palmer told the Chair he was honored to work with Chair Porter and it was a delight to serve with him.

Council Member Hultquist thanked Chair Porter for his service and calling for an emeritus status position on the Council. Council Member Fisher said Chair Porter was a wonderful influence, tremendous treasure because of his insight and knowledge for the Council. Council Member Huff-told Chair Porter he has always been professional and supportive. Executive Director Rappazzo said Chair Porter's guidance and wisdom was priceless, helping her becoming acclimated to her position as Executive Director many years ago and wished him all the best.

4. Mount Olivet Cemetery - History, Events and Restoration Presentation by Ronald Pearcey, Cemetery Superintendent and Chris Haugh, Community Relations & Historic-Preservation Manager:

Chris Haugh - Mount Olivet Preservationist and Historian - This time of year, the cemetery is very busy with fall historic tours and candlelight tours with the first one being tonight. Every Thursday morning from 8am-12pm volunteers (Stoners/Fixers) clean and restore stones. The Fixers perform restoration work to memorials. This group was taught by Jonathan Appell, Gravestone Conservator and Preservation Mason.

A couple of years ago, the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services sent a group of incarcerated citizens to participate in a training program with Jonathan Appell. Incarcerated citizens

spent a week fixing and restoring stones as well as learning basic restoration techniques of trade. Additionally, this group was taken to Williamsport Cemetery to restore memorials that had been damaged by vandalism.

The Stoner/Fixer season runs from April 20 until the weather changes or the stone cleaning solution runs out. Most volunteers are people who pass by. To join, volunteers must sign a waiver, attend an initial meeting and then attend the onsite training. This year Stoners cleaned 1200 memorials.

5. PRINCE Project-Update, by Council Member Zinner

Inmates from the Dorsey Run Facility have been out working at St. Peters in West Baltimore. This project will last at least 2 weeks. The inmates have been cutting back a wooded area and performing cleaning up activities at the cemetery.

6. The Mount Olivet Cemetery Fixer Group presented “Preservation and Enhancement Fund” by Ray Crough and Bob Linehauser.

Stoner Crough started 2 years ago as a cleaner. Stoners Dottie, Bob and Ray have developed training for fixing broken and fractured stones. Their first project was the “First Fallen Fighter in Maryland” stone. The Fire Company came out and was so impressed with their work, the Fire Company still talks about it.

The Fixers restored a Cradle grave that only ½ of pieces were found. They made the second largest casting and planted flowers to represent blankets. The Fixers only fixed 2 stones a year. Now they are fixing 1-2 stones per day. The Fixers go ahead of Stoners to provide safety first. If families are in the cemetery and want to have a stone cleaned, stoners will stop working on a project to assist the family. The fixing is done on Tuesdays. Today they will be casting for a hospital. Stoners and Fixers have become a valuable resource for the cemetery and to the community.

6. Unfinished Business- The Department of Labor is moving to a new location. Executive Director Rappazzo will notify the Council when the moving date has been determined. In the meantime, the OCO is working to get as paperless as possible by scanning and archiving as many records as possible.

Council Member Palmer asks for the OCO to build a relationship with the Maryland Cemetery and Cremation Association (MCCA). Council Member Huff is one of the former presidents and stated that OCO and the MCCA periodically have meetings for updates, etc. Last year Executive Director Rappazzo did a presentation for MCCA. A few months ago, MCCA came to the Office to meet with Executive Director Rappazzo.

7. New Business

Chair Porter's official last day will be 12/4/24. Executive Director Rappazzo is now accepting nominations for Chair Porter's replacement.

8. Investigator's Report

9-26-2024 to 10-23-2024

As of 09/30/2024- there are 73 open Complaints (54 of them pertain to a single cemetery)

New Complaints-3

- Refund on unused prepaid arrangements by decedent
- Awaiting a ratified contract copy that has been requested, but not received since 8/2024
- Decedent's surviving child requesting assignment of cemetery lots that are co-owned with other surviving siblings.

Closed Complaints-7

Total Open Complaints-69

9. Financial Compliance Administrator's Report

The Financial Compliance Administrators position is currently vacant. This position will be posted soon.

10. Licensing Specialist's Report

Currently the OCO has a Temporary employee assisting with renewals and licensing. However, Executive Director Rappazzo does all the reviews, approvals and deposits. There have been 99 initial/renewal applications processed since the OCO's last meeting.

All licensees have been notified of the contract fee increase via email and in the newsletter.

11. Legislative Update

The Green Death Care Act passed in the 2024 legislative session (Natural Organic Reduction (NOR) and Alkaline Hydrolysis). The OCO has been working with the Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors to develop the regulations for Alkaline Hydrolysis. Tentatively hoping to have them completed and finalized by Feb 2025. Creating the regulations for NOR has been tabled for now but will be started in the coming year.

The OCO has submitted a legislative suggestion pertaining to the Notice filed for dis/reinterment recommendation. The OCO is requesting the law be changed to have the Notice be handled by the Health Department and is currently awaiting Secretarial approval.

AAG Venuti offered to share the Department's full policy with any council member who requests it.

Council Member Zinner is working with a group that is meeting to propose legislation for the upcoming session that will affect the OCO. The group will reintroduce the OCO's Abandoned Cemeteries Fund, with amendments to include neglected cemeteries. Additional legislation that will be submitted will include a statewide unified cemetery database, disinterment rules changed from to having the OCO make recommendations to the State's Attorney and an increased penalty for desecration. All proposals have been discussed with several State Representatives.

Council Member Palmer requested a copy of the 2023 Office of Cemetery Oversight's General Assembly Annual report.

12. Public Comments

Clarence Boston, Chambers Funeral Home Riverdale Park, is a licensed crematory operator in North Carolina. He is now looking to open a crematory in Maryland and is working with the OCO to obtain his permit.

13. **Adjournment** motion Council Member Palmer at 11:56 pm, Seconded by Council Member Zinner.

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