
Office of Cemetery Oversight
Advisory Council On Cemetery Operations

Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 27, 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: Staff

Present:

Deborah Rappazzo- Executive Director

Leila Whitley- Administrative Aide/Licensing Specialist

Dreama Anderson- Investigator

Lucas Manes – Financial Compliance Administrator

Kimberly Ward-Attorney General

Gregory Morgan – Commissioner of O & P

Kausar Syed- Deputy Commissioner of O & P

www.labor.maryland.gov

Staff Absent:

n/a

Council Members:

Frank Porter- Council Chair

Craig Huff

Chris Palmer

Yvonne Fisher

David Zinner

John (Ron) Pearcey

Bruce Hultquist

Council Members Absent:

J. Michael Bennett

Rebecca Bailey

Erich March

Walter Tegeler

Guests

Nilsa Harrison – Director of Board of Morticians (BOM)

2. **Meeting Called to Order:** By Frank Porter, Advisory Council, Chair at 10:05 am
3. **Approval of Today's Agenda:** Moved by Yvonne Fisher and 2nd by Chris Palmer Approved
4. **Approval of January 26, 2023:** Minutes moved- by Chris Palmer and 2nd David Zinner
5. **Executive Director's Report:**
 - a. Discussion:

- Commissioner Gregory Morgan will be leaving his position with the Department of Labor on or around May 10, 2023.
- Commissioner Morgan – Changes are taking place throughout many State agencies regarding appointed positions.
- Chair Porter was disappointed to hear Commissioner Morgan will be leaving stating that he has given the Office of Cemetery Oversight (OCO) more attention than any other commissioner.
- Director Rappazzo introduced the Director of the Board of Morticians (BOM), Nilsa Harrison. She has been at with BOM for approximately six months.
- OCO and BOM are both State agencies that regulate individuals and businesses in the death care industry as well as mirroring cremation laws and regulations.
- Director Rappazzo introduced, Lucas Manes, Financial Compliance Administrator with the OCO.
- Lucas Manes provided a brief background about himself to the group. He stated he has been employed at the Department of Human Services as a Budget Analyst for the past three to four years and he is looking forward to working with the OCO and all the Advisory Council members.
- The OCO's Budget was provided by Director Rappazzo. As of March, Fiscal Year (FY) End 2023, has a carry forward balance of \$166,621.43. However, the final calculations for the OCO's expenditures (Information Technology Department (IT), as well as Legal Expenses) have not been finalized because of fiscal year close out. These types of expenditures vary from year to year. Director Rappazzo hopes to share that information, by the time of our next meeting. There have been some structural changes with some of the licensees. In the past, OCO has had a big year for revenue, followed by a lower year for revenue. Licensing periods are every two years. License fees do not fluctuate, the contract fees fluctuate. Cemeteries have different amounts of contracts from year to year that are reported to the OCO on there renewal (every two years).
- Upcoming events: Fallen Heroes Day is Friday, May 5th at Dulaney Valley Memorial Gardens and First Responders Day at King Memorial Park will be Monday, May 29, 2023.
- There are few Advisory Council Reappointments due by September 2023. Director Rappazzo asked that Council Members get their information in as soon as possible so that it can be sent for reappointment consideration.

5. Old Business:

- a. On-line Licensing: An update was provided pertaining to on-line licensing. Currently, the OCO is working on accepting payments on-line for initial and renewal licensing fees. The anticipated start date should be May or June 2023. Licensees will be able to pay by check

or credit card. Manual checks will still be received. Hopefully, 95% of payments will be received online. There will be a fee for paying with a credit card.

- b. The Cemetery Inventory Listing: An updated category listing has been addressed with IT. Once they have been uploaded into our system, you will be able to search online (similar to other boards in the Occupational and Professional Licensing Department).
- c. Cemetery Restoration Project: The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services will have inmates mow the lawn at Mt. Zion Cemetery. There have been numerous complaints regarding the height of the grass and the overall appearance of the cemetery. Furthermore, an additional ten (10) monuments have been received at the cemetery that were ordered prior to the church caring for the cemetery.
- d. The Prince Project-Update: The inmate crews are still going out to provide cemetery maintenance several days a week at different cemeteries.
- e. Upcoming Conference: The Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites Annual Conference is scheduled for Saturday, May 6, 2023, from 10:00 a.m.-3:p.m., in Frederick, Maryland.
- f. Alkaline Hydrolysis: Council Member Palmer stated that he found something on the internet that states that it is legal in Maryland. Director Rappazzo stated that alkaline hydrolysis is illegal in Maryland at this time.

6. **New Business:**

- a. Council Member Palmer inquired about the status of licensing for Reflection Park Inc. Director Rappazzo gave insight that the cemetery should be licensed later this year. They have a few more procedures so complete before they are licensed with OCO.
- b. Council Member Palmer further stated that Serenity Ridge is functioning and is currently performing burials.

7. Investigator's Report: Five new complaints have been received this month. These complaints are pertaining to disallowed decorations in a cemetery, and deceptive sales practice, etc.

8. Financial Compliance Administrator's Report: Deferred to our next meeting.

9. Licensing Specialist's Report: There were 47 renewals processed in the month of March 2023, and 31 renewals processed, in April 2023. Currently, the total amount of renewals that have been processed year-to-date for 2023 total 409. As more online procedures are

developed for licensing initial and renewal applications, other duties will be assigned to the Licensing Specialist for processing.

10. Legislative Update:

- a. Kimberly Ward, AG: The OCO will be introduced to their new AG possibly by the next Advisory Council meeting.
- b. House Bill 676: Cemeteries – Pet Remains – Duty of Perpetual Care has passed, with OCO’s amendments- not sure when the signing of the bill will take place.
- c. All pet cemeteries will have to be licensed with OCO. If any council members know of any or see any pet cemeteries, please let the director know.
- d. Chair Porter – Since there will be more work to do in OCO’s office, will there be the need for the staff to increase?
- e. Director Rappazzo does not believe there are a lot of pet cemeteries. If there are, then the monies from them will justify another employee.

11. Public Comment:

The next OCO Advisory Council meeting will be held on Thursday, June 22nd. This meeting will be held virtually.

12. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 12:01 pm. A motion was made by Council Member Palmer and 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\(b\)](#)