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**Office of Cemetery Oversight**  
**Advisory Council On Cemetery Operations**

*Meeting Minutes*  
*Thursday, March 23, 2023*  
*10:00 AM*

**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>  
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- absent

Dreama Anderson- Investigator

Matthew McKinney- Legislative Appointments

Kimberly Ward-Attorney General

Kausar Syed- Deputy Commissioner

Danielle Anderson- Web Content and Outreach Coordinator

Staff Absent:

Leila Whitley-Licensing Specialist

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Council Members:

Frank Porter- Council Chair  
Craig Huff  
Chris Palmer  
Yvonne Fisher  
David Zinner  
Erich March

Council Members Absent:

J. Michael Bennett  
Rebecca Bailey  
John (Ron) Pearcey  
Walter Tegeler  
Bruce Hultquist

**Guests**

Alan Schneider  
Elinor Thompson  
Christa W. -Delegate Wivell (left mtg 10:42)

- 2. Meeting Called to Order:** By Frank Porter, Advisory Council, Chair at 10:10 am
- 3. Approval of Today's Agenda:** Moved by Yvonne Fisher and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Chris Palmer Approved
- 4. Approval of January 26, 2023:** Minutes moved- by Chris Palmer and 2<sup>nd</sup> David Zinner  
Correction BOMFD Approved
- 5. Executive Director's Report:**
  - a. Discussion:
    - New move-Our office will be moving during the first quarter of next year to 100 S. Charles Street. As more information becomes available an update will be provided.
    - Draft of new Newsletter- final within next few weeks
  - New Employee: Lucas Manes has accepted the position as our new Financial Compliance Administrator. I will introduce him to the Advisory Council during our next meeting in April.

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- The Council was presented with a handout providing the number of permit holders/registrants. Executive Director Rappazzo provided information pertaining to contract fees, fees between cemeteries, burial goods businesses, and crematories and a few of the requirements/process of opening a new cemetery.

-Contract fees for cemeteries and burial goods businesses currently are \$15 per contract over \$250. Contract fees make up the largest part of the office's renewal fees.

-Explanation of why crematory fees are higher than other permit/registration fees were provided to the Council. These fees were determined and agreed upon by both the Office of Cemetery Oversight (OCO) and Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors (BOMFD). Also, it was determined that crematories wouldn't charge a per contract fee.

-Information was provided on how and what individuals/business must do to obtain approval to create a new cemetery. The first required step is to obtain approval from planning/zoning of the county wherein a new cemetery will be created. Then there are multiple financial reports, initial deposit into a perpetual care trust and the submission of multiple applications that are necessary to obtain licensure with the OCO. This is a long process and could take several years to obtain all the necessary approvals before the cemetery can open for business.

- Executive Director Rappazzo will share a copy of the OCO-most current budget at our next meeting. Currently, the office is operating within budget. Executive Director Rappazzo confirmed that a copy of the OCO's budget was presented last year.
- PRINCE update: Council member Zinner has been working with DPSCS to schedule inmate work crews to perform cemetery clean-up. Currently the work crews have worked on six African American cemeteries utilizing this program. Elinor Thompson has assisted with identifying cemeteries in need of assistance. These same workers are enrolled in the class called "Cemetery Restoration Project" which was created from the collaborative efforts between DPSCS.
- Executive Director Rappazzo will provide the Council with the 2022 OCO General Assembly Year End combined report. has moved to more digital processing of renewals since the pandemic. OCO pamphlet with BOMFD is being worked on.

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**6. 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 is May 2023.

b. Cemetery Restoration Project: The first session of the Cemetery Restoration Project is well under way. The training is held every Tuesday and Thursday for the next 6 – 8 weeks with an additional week of training at a local cemetery. The instructor is Robert Moscow and under his direction the inmates are learning stone care, plant care and general cemetery clean-up skills. The next training session is expected to begin the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week of May 2023.

**7. New Business:**

a. Discussion:

The OCO continues to identify cemeteries, burial goods businesses and crematories that should be licensed.

**8. Investigator's Report:** 15 new complaints, primarily memorial installations problems.

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

**10. Licensing Specialist's Report:** Deferred to next meeting.

**11. Legislative Update:**

a. Legislative Update-John Hart is no longer with the Attorney General's Office.

b. HB 1060 Natural Organic Reduction-Executive Director Rappazzo, met with Delegate Keyser and Andrew Fugliani, Legislative Director to discuss the new bill. Representatives of the BOMFD did not attend the meeting. Recommended amendments were provided by the OCO pertaining to new crematories and whether they should be licensed by OCO and/or BOMFD. Currently, only six states have approved legislation pertaining to Natural Organic Reduction.

b. HB 0869-Alkaline Hydrolysis-Is not currently legal in Maryland.

c. HB 676 Pet Cemetery Protection Perpetual Care-Bill wanted the OCO to oversee the perpetual care trust for pet cemeteries. Currently, the OCO does not regulate pet cemeteries and will be unable to provide protection for their perpetual care trust. The OCO has made several amendment recommendations to the current bill.

**12. Public Comment:**

The next OCO Advisory Council meeting will be held on Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup>. This meeting may be held in-person and/or virtual.

**13. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm. A motion was made and seconded.

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