
Office of Cemetery Oversight
Advisory Council On Cemetery Operations

Meeting Agenda
Thursday, June 26, 2025
9:30 AM

In-Person Information:

Meeting Location: 100 S. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD (Virtual)

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](tel:+14157379563)

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

2. Meeting Called to Order 9:35 am

Members

Yvonne Fisher-Council Chair

Erich March

www.labor.maryland.gov

David Zinner
Michael Bennett
Craig Huff
Bruce Hultquist
Ron Pearcey
Walt Tegeler

Absent Advisory Council Members

Chris Palmer
Clarence Boston

Staff

Deborah Rappazzo-Executive Director
Sarah McDermott-Deputy Commissioner
Kathy Simmons-Jenkins- Administrative Assistant
Dreema Anderson-Investigator
Matthew Venuiti-Attorney General

Visitors

Lily Berkley- Licensed Funeral Director
Adrian Gardner-Partner Willow Green
Sam Siebert- Family make Alkaline machinery
Adam Block-ISEA, Manger, Advocacy & Regulatory Affairs
Judith Tanner

3. Approval of Today's Agenda

Motion: 1st Council Member Bennett, 2nd Council Member Zinner

4. Approval of March 27, 2025 – Minutes

Motion: 1st Council Member Pearcey, 2nd Council Member Huff

5. Executive Director's Report

- a. **Introduction**-Executive Director Rappazzo welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- b. **New Chairperson**- Yvonne Fisher was introduced as the Chair for the Office of Cemetery Oversight Advisory Council.

c. **Youthworks Students**-Starting on July 7th, OCO will be assigned 1 Youthwork Student for the next 4 weeks. During their stay they will be updating documents, attending meetings and training and scanning licensing files.

6. Old Business

a. **Positions Postings**-The Licensing Specialist and Financial Compliance positions have been posted. Interviews will be scheduled in the coming weeks for both positions.

7. New Business

None

8. Investigator's Report

Currently there are the following Opened Complaints (Prior Months and Current Month):

a. **Complaints Opened/Closed/Balance:**

April - 99

New Complaints =7, Closed Complaints =9, April End Balance =97

May - 86

balance=97, New Complaints =4, Closed Complaints =15, May End Balance =86

June - 86

May End Balance=86, New Complaints =8, Closed Complaints =9, June 25th End Balance =85

b. **Inspections - 8**

April

May

June

9. Financial Compliance Administrator's Report*

None

10. Licensing Specialist's Report

a. Most items (initial/renewal payments) are processed online for businesses and individuals. However, there are a few payments that are still received via mail and

processed manually. Applications (initial/renewal) are still being sent to the Office via email. However, there are still a few applications that the Office receives via mail.

- b. The scanning project continues with hopes of having all licensing files scanned by early next year.
- c. Continuing to work with IT on the Pdf licensure process. This will allow licensees the ability to print their own licenses (initial/renewal).
- d. New project manager has been hired to continue the development of the new database.
- e. Pdf licensure is being worked on to prevent having print licenses.

11. Legislative Update

Alkaline Hydrolysis Regulations-Review of public comments, etc.

Counsel Venuti stated that the public comment period for the Alkaline Hydrolysis Regulations has ended. The drafting process was completed between the OCO and the Maryland Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors (BOMFD). Italicized language in the regulation will be added; bracketed language will be deleted. After the meeting the regulations will be reviewed to determine what items, if any, will be updated.

Speaker Lily Berkley had 3 points to offer:

1. Mandatory attendance rule- Alkaline Hydrolysis Systems are designed with monitoring and do not require in-person attendance. Features are in place to alert the operator when there is an issue that needs to be addressed. 27 other states have no requirement.
2. Special containers- Are not necessarily good for transportation as they break down in high humidity or in contact with fluids. Need leakproof bags such as PVC bags that can store decedents' bodies until performing alkaline hydrolysis cremation wherein the body is placed into the machine. Families may want the body covered when going into the machine, therefore, offering a shroud would be acceptable. High temp PVA does not break down until in the machine. However, the body fluids are harder on the bags. Original body bags are the best container until the process occurs.
3. Removal of pacemaker-Temperature does not reach a level to explode, as it is with traditional cremation. Not wanting to expose operators to unnecessary blood

pathogens. Temperature is far below the explosive temperature necessary for explosion risk, making it unnecessary for removal.

Council Chair Fisher inquired whether families will be notified of implants and pacemaker removal. Yes. Sam Seibert has helped 27 states with regulations and is willing to assist. 100 systems placed throughout the world which includes 500 pet machines. The machine is designed for fail safes, including backup generator. Machines run from 4/12/16 hours. The process uses higher temperature for faster cremation.

Council Chair Fisher asked about family witnessing, specifically if the machines can have the family push the button to start the process.

Speake Adrian Gardner argued a viewing room should not be mandated. This should be optional. Regulations as written require the establishment be certified. However, certifications are only for individuals. Proposed regulations of distance of people near the door 10 feet is not relevant to alkaline hydrolysis.

Council Chair Fisher inquired about the certification of the facility.

AAG Venuti stated there may be an error in the regulations, as it is the operator that requires the training certificate. Legally a suit would be filed against the individual and subsequently establishment.

Council Member Zinner was uncomfortable with funeral establishment referred to as a consumer.

AAG Venuti argued some funeral home contract for services.

Council Chair Fisher asked will the information regarding the waste be publicized to public, regarding the risks?

Visitor Judith Tanner stated the process has never risked public health and will be disclosed to the family for consideration. Permits are issued for over 25K/ day. However alkaline Hydrolysis produces 285 gallons of fluid from the cremation process. Every wastewater plant in the world has a list of prohibitions of items.

Visitor Adam Block raised concerns regarding safety equipment, i.e. dust masks-should be NCICAS, eyewash station IFCAA standards not OSHA, as ICCFA is higher. He also asked for other items such as hand and eye protection.

Council Chair Fisher questioned what are biodegradable life of the chemicals - consumed or treated to reduce the PH level?

Visitor Judith Tanner stated chemical compositions are designed in line with the weight of individuals. Machine will adjust chemical. Storage - up to 10 years in a dry area. Manufacturer guarantees for 2 years. If facility closes, the chemical company will accept the chemicals back.

Council Chair Fisher asked what is the breakdown of the chemical over the life, how much dilution is required.

Visitor Judith Tanner answered it is an alkaline salt; the potassium salt Potassium chloride would be the derivative. Company has been tested and has standards, and the wastewater system also analyzes. Sodium chloride in food industries, hair products, etc.

Council Member Zinner asked whether the regulations need to address storage and movement of the chemicals, due to the risk of chemical burns.

AAG Venuti, will be addressed by MOSH.

Member Zinner sees need for regulations for handling chemicals before dilution. Most states try to address all issues. State MOSH will be pushing current best practices. OSHA applies to storage and safe handling; therefore, we could end up with a conflict with the MOSH regulations. For example, a safety shower must be within 10 feet, needs special installation.

Visitor Adam Block, recommends that regulation states that all OSHA regulations must be followed. During crematory inspection is where the safety issues may be raised using a check list.

Council Member Zinner would like the regulations to include following OSHA.

Visitor Adrian Gardner, agreed that chemicals must be treated with care. Chemicals are on the General ARS list not the Dangerous Chemicals. Chemicals are recommended to be stored in a cabinet. However, the fire department will make ultimate decision. Chemicals can be purchased in liquid or powder format. OSHA compliant containers will be used for transfer with PPC equipment.

Council Chair Fisher, inquired whether there is national regulation for training employees?

Visitor Adrian Gardner stated the current regulations are CANA/ IFCAA or another reputable organization which would be the same requirement for alkaline hydrolysis. OSHA regulations currently require the approved insurer to make sure that all standards and regulations are followed.

AAG Venuti agreed safety handling will be discussed with the BOMFD. AAG Venuti advised nothing will be approved today as there has to be agreement with OCO and BOFMD.

Council Member Zinner, inquired whether training for Alkaline Hydrolysis will be similar to traditional Cremation Training, which covers everything from nuts to bolts.

Executive Director Rappazzo believes there are a few training programs being created now to cover Alkaline Hydrolysis. Member Zinner inquired whether the proposed regs were sent to Advisory Council members. Director Rappazzo believe that it was.

b. Natural Organic Reduction:

The OCO continues to work with the BOMFD to finish the regulations and hopes to be completed by September.

- c. Maryland Inventory of Burial sites workgroup-** Workgroup is being assembled. 7 individuals appointed by Secretary Wu. Elizabeth Hughes, Executive Director of Maryland Historical Trust will appoint the other individuals. Group will be looking at definitions and going out to counties to collect information. OCO is hoping to house the cemetery inventory database, however funding needs to be explored. Next meeting will be held in a few weeks.

- d. Abandoned and Neglected Cemetery Fund-** Funding will come from an appropriation from the Governor's Office. Fundraising may also be provided. The requirements for funding will need to be developed. Looking at other states, such as Delaware, with similar funds, for guidance. The OCO will be visiting the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to assist with developing the fund. Council Members will be invited to attend. Ownership will be reviewed. The fund will be completely separate from OCO therefore cemeteries outside of our jurisdiction will be considered. Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services may be utilized for maintenance pertaining to abandoned and neglected cemeteries.

Council Member March suggested a way to eliminate the need for cutting grass would be to cover the ground with rubber tire surfacing like what is used in playgrounds. Spray is temporary and washed away after a few rainstorms. Substance used would need to prevent sun exposure. First task is for the group to identify the cemeteries. Council Member March recommended researching the names to get a legacy contribution from decedents.

Council Member Zinner asked if contributions be considered tax deductible? Send inquiries to OCO for consideration.

Executive Director Rappazzo stated the purpose is to beautify and gain community involvement. Hopefully it will be on the tax form checklist.

Council Member Zinner asked about liability and trespassing issues for the use of PRINCE participants for abandoned cemeteries, issues need to be considered as they may be prohibitive.

Executive Director Rappazzo has spoken with DPCS, and they are willing to work with OCO to address liability and trespassing issues.

12. Public Comment

None

13. Adjournment

Council Chair Fisher made the motion to adjourn, and it was seconded by Council Member Zinner. Adjourned 11:48 am.

Next meeting is on 09/25/2025 – Virtually.

*The starred items will be deferred until future, meeting

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