**Office of Cemetery Oversight**

**Advisory Council On Cemetery Operations**

*Meeting Minutes*

*Thursday, December 7, 2023*

9:30 *AM*

Virtual Sign-on Information:

**Sign on information:** Join with Google Meet- [meet.google.com/qbi-saua-pre](https://meet.google.com/qbi-saua-pre?hs=122&authuser=0)

-Up to 250 participants

**Meeting ID:** https:// [meet.google.com/qbi-saua-pre](https://meet.google.com/qbi-saua-pre?hs=122&authuser=0)

Phone Number/US‬)+1 661-432-1294‬

To call in: **Dial** **PIN: 461 303 003#‬**

HOUSEKEEPING

COMAR 09.01.11.03, http://[www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/comarhtml/09/09.01.11.03.htm](http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/comarhtml/09/09.01.11.03.htm)

.03 Public Attendance.

* + 1. The public is invited to attend and observe any open session of the unit within the Department.
		2. 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

Present:

Deborah Rappazzo – Executive Director

Matthew McKinney – Director of Strategic Initiatives

Matthew Venuti – Assistant Attorney General

Dreama Anderson- Investigator

 Council Members Present:

Frank Porter

Michael Bennett

Craig Huff

Chris Palmer

Eric March

David Zinner

Staff Absent

Leila Whitley – Administrative Aide/Licensing Specialist

Lucas Manes – Financial Compliance Administrator

Council Members Absent:

Yvonne Fisher

John (Ron) Pearcey

Walter Tegeler

Rebecca Bailey

Bruce Hultquist

Guests

n/a

2. Meeting Called to Order by Chairperson: Frank Porter, Advisory Council, Chair 9:32 am

3. Approval of Today’s Agenda

Motion by Council Member Zinner, Second by Council Member Palmer, Minutes Approved

4. Approval of August 1, 2023, and October 26, 2023 – Minutes Motion by Council Member Palmer, Second by Council Member Huff, both Minutes Approved

5. Executive Director’s Report

 1. Introduction:

Thank you to Ron Pearcy and his entire staff at Mount Olivet Cemetery located in Frederick, Maryland, for hosting the October Advisory Council Meeting. For those who missed this meeting also missed a tour of the cemetery as well as the memorial restoration projects that are being done by the “Friends of Mount Olivet Cemetery”.

The OCO will remain at our current location until the end of the 1st quarter. Our projected move date should be sometime during the second quarter of 2024.

The OCO has been utilizing a temporary employee 2 or 3 days a week, to help scan documents, etc. because storage will be very limited at our new location.

As more information becomes available, I will provide an update to the Advisory Council.

I would like to introduce to the Advisory Council, Adrian Gardner, with Green Legacy. Since there is a lot of information to cover and a limited time, Mr. Gardner will introduce each of the speakers.

1. Understanding Cremation Using Alkaline Hydrolysis, by Samantha Seiber, Bio-Response Solution, Inc.

Background:

Ms. Seiber works for her family’s business, Biology Degree-Biosafety.

They have obtained permits for 430 pet systems and 75 of the 90 human systems worldwide. Her family’s business has made all of the Alkaline Hydrolysis systems used today, except for 7. The standard sized machine has a capacity of 500 lbs. Families receive 20-30% more remains than traditional cremation.

This process was started by Dr. Peter Weber and Dr. Jordan Peay in 1992. Her dad commercialized the process in 1995, and in 2003 in Minnesota, the first deceased human body utilized this new method. In 2009, Alkaline Hydrolysis was used on pets to destroy the pathogens from Mad Cow disease. Pet system can be multiple units; however, human systems can be only 1 unit.

How does it work? First liquid chemicals are automatically added by the unit based on the weight of the body in machine. Then a dry chemical(looks like flakes) is added manually. The machine then circulates both the dry and liquid chemicals at a temperature which makes the process sterile. After the cool down period, the next process is to pulverize the bones. Although the bones are soft enough to be manually mashed, they are processed by a pulverizing machine.

1. Understanding the Process of Natural Organic Reduction, by Lily Buerkle, Green Families are looking for greener funeral options and are looking to Natural Organic Reduction for their final wishes. Legacy previously had to refer families to North Carolina since their home state doesn’t offer this type of process.
2. Looking Ahead to Death Care Policy Changes and 2024 Legislation, by Adrian Gardner, Green Legacy

Thank you to the OCO for all their support during the 2023 Legislative Session. Mr. Gardner is aspiring to be the first funeral director and certified crematory operator handling these new processes. However, Lily Buerkle his business partner, is a licensed funeral director in Maryland, VA and DC

6. Old Business: \* N/A

7. New Business: The PRINCE Project is scheduled to restart its operations again next week at St. Peters cemetery. There has been a new MOU, created between PRINCE and the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services.

8. Investigator’s Report: There have been 7 new complaints received since our last meeting. These 7 complaints pertain to memorial products. Currently memorial vendors are only providing updates when the memorial is within 30 days of shipment.

9. Financial Compliance Administrator’s Report: \* Deferred until next month

10. Licensing Specialist’s Report: Still mailing initial and renewal applications upon request only. Our manual deposits have slowed, as most payments are being made online. Once we are fully automated, we will introduce PDF Licensing. This is where the licensee will be able to print their own license.

11. Legislative Update: The legislative suggestion for PreNeed Cremation Certificates has been rejected. The Bills for Cemeteries-Burial-Transit Permits-Required Information, and Abandoned Cemetery Fund, should be dropped in January/February. Regulatory proposals should be posted in the Daily Register in January/February as well.

 Currently no sponsors are needed on Bills. The Legislative office will be meeting next week to create/review talking points on each of the Bills.

12. Public Comment: N/A

Council Member Palmer- Asked about the status of a soon to be new permit holder. An update was provided noting that they are awaiting final approval from planning/ zoning, hopefully will be received by early next year.

Council Member Zinner would like to add ground burial discussion for the next meeting.

Council Member Palmer wanted to know how many of the 56 crematories in Maryland the OCO regulates? The Executive Director Rappazzo, stated 6. What influence do we have to shape the carbon footprint? OCO ensures compliance with operation. EPA handles carbon footprint.

13. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 11:42AM, Council Member Palmer moved, no objections. Next meeting is January 25, 2024.

 \*The starred items may be deferred until the January 2024 meeting

\*\*\*A portion of this meeting may be closed pursuant to the General Provisions Article

Annotated Code of Maryland, §3-305(b)