Maryland Inventory of Cemeteries and Burial Sites Working Group
Meeting 2 – July 12, 2025 at 12:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

Working Group Members Present: Elizabeth Hughes, Deborah Rappazzo, Hope Metzler, Corey
Lewis, Beth Burgess, Mark Edwards, Daniel Phalen, Donna Nelson, Reginald Bishop

MHT Staff Present: Dr. Zachary Singer, Gregory Brown

OAG Staff Present: Adam Snyder, Lucy Laudeman

   I.   Microsoft Teams

Ms. Hughes noted that the meeting would be recorded so that it could be shared with members
who are unable to attend today's meeting.

Ms. Hughes reported that she created a Microsoft Teams channel which includes all of the
Working Group materials. Some members have been unable to access Microsoft Teams,
including: Mr. Lewis, Ms. Metzler, Ms. Simmons, and Mr. Phelan. Mr. Brown will be reaching
out to these members to determine if there is a fix to the problem.

Mr. Lewis noted that the Maryland State Archives typically creates a gmail account for
volunteers to use which may be an alternative approach to file sharing using google drive.

   II.   State Cemetery Inventory Programs

Office of the Attorney General intern Lucy Laudeman provided an overview of her research into
state cemetery inventory programs. She has prepared a spreadsheet (uploaded into the Microsoft
Teams channel) summarizing her research which divides state programs into the following
categories and subcategories:

   1. States with a dedicated inventory that use GIS mapping for locational data
      a. GIS map includes identifying information
      b. GIS map access is restricted in some way
      c. GIS map provides only the outline of the cemetery
   2. States with a dedicated inventory that locates burial sites using a list (no map)
      a. Inventory is searchable
      b. Inventory is in the form of a list
   3. States with no dedicated inventory
   4. States working towards creating a dedicated inventory

In category 1, she recommended that Alabama Delaware, North Carolina and Utah are good
examples to review. In category 1a, it may be useful to follow up with the states listed here to
inquire how the restriction is handled and communicated.

Ms. Laudeman noted that in most cases, the cemetery inventory is maintained by the State Historic Preservation Office while in other cases the inventory is housed in a state Office of Archaeology or is associated with a statewide non-profit organization.

The Working Group thanked Ms. Laudeman for her thorough review of state programs.

Mr. Edwards reported that he has created materials that describe state cemetery inventory programs for 5 states (Alabama, Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida) which includes data requirements and what the state inventory form looks like. This material has been uploaded into the Microsoft Teams channel.

Ms. Hughes inquired if the Maryland State Archives (MSA) had a policy related to restricting access to cemetery data which might inform this project since some of MSA's data might include locational information. Mr. Lewis responded that there are no specific laws or regulations that restrict access to cemetery records. While death certificates are publicly accessible, they are subject to a 10-year restriction period. Cemetery and burial records are typically acquired as part of our Special Collections, and access to these materials may be limited based on the terms outlined in the deposit agreement.

Mr. Lewis noted that these records often contain personally identifiable information (PII), such as payment details, account numbers, or Social Security numbers. As a result, MSA does not make the complete records publicly available. Instead, they limit access and provide staff-assisted reference services. Upon request, staff can search the files and share essential information—such as dates of birth and death, or burial locations—when appropriate.

One example of this approach is how MSA handles the Mt. Zion and Western Star group of records which includes the following statement of restriction:

RESTRICTED: The Mt. Zion records are on deposit and not publicly accessible. Family members may request staff assistance for burial lot information. For access questions about Mt. Zion and Western Star Cemetery records, please contact the Special Collections Department, msa.helpdesk@maryland.gov.

III.   Cemetery and Burial Site Definitions

Ms. Hughes inquired if the Working Group had identified additional terms that required consistent definitions in statute. Mr. Lewis suggested that the term "burial transmittal" may be an additional term to consider. Mr. Snyder indicated that while "burial transmittal" does not appear in statute, "burial transit certificate" does appear. Ms. Rappazzo clarified that this document is created at the same time that a death certificate is created.

Ms. Rappazzo noted that a uniform definition of the term "abandoned cemetery" is being developed by the working group that has just gotten underway to develop the Abandoned and Neglected Cemeteries Fund which was created as a result of passage of HB535 during the 2025 legislative session. It may be helpful for Mr. Snyder to connect with the Office of Cemetery Oversight counsel in order to share information on statutory definitions of cemetery terms.

Ms. Metzler indicated that she has a list of terms with problematic definitions which she can share with the group. Mr. Edwards suggested that the list of terms included in *The Coalition's Guide to Burial Site Stewardship*, produced in 2012 by the Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites, may be helpful to review as well. He also provided a list of cemetery/burial site names that was prepared by David Zinner.

Dr. Singer added that creation of a definition of "unassociated funerary object" may be helpful to add to the definitions list. An example would be a grave marker that has been relocated and is no longer associated with a burial. The term "associated funerary object" already exists in statute.

IV.   Cemetery Inventory Discussion

Ms. Hughes reported that at the next meeting Mr. Brown would present an example of what a GIS map-based Maryland cemetery inventory might look like in order to get feedback from the group on the proposed approach. Ms. Hughes suggested that in light of the state's current budget challenges, it would be important to create a system that is manageable within current resources. One of the requirements of the report to be created by the Working Group is to determine the cost of designing, implementing, and maintaining a State cemetery inventory system and to recommend a source of funding to implement a State cemetery inventory system beginning in fiscal year 2027. A proposal that includes the launch of a basic system that can be enhanced over time as the budget allows may be the best way to get a map based statewide cemetery inventory underway as soon as possible.

Ms. Hughes inquired if the group had any further thoughts regarding the inventory data categories that were discussed at the last meeting. Mr. Phelan indicated that he had the following questions for consideration at the next meeting:

- Will the data included in the cemetery inventory be proprietary?
- Should the public register in order to have access to the inventory?
- Lat and long preferred metric – what does this mean? Can lat/long data be gathered from Find a Grave?
- ADC reference – if it exists already, it can stay but we are not likely to continuing adding to this data field as these books are no longer being updated.
- GIS fuzzy vs. accurate location – which is preferred?
- Erased cemeteries and potter's fields – should there be a category for these?
- Approximate acreage should be added as a data field
- Cemeteries often have multiple names – there should be multiple fields for multiple names (common vs. official)

V.   Next Meeting Date

The meeting poll that was conducted previously identified Friday at noon as the meeting day and time that is best for the Working Group. Ms. Hughes will schedule bi-weekly meetings of the group into September so that they will live on members' calendars.

The next meeting will take place on July 25th at noon.