

Maryland Inventory of Cemeteries and Burial Sites Working Group
Meeting 3 – July 25, 2025 at 12:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

Working Group Members Present: Elizabeth Hughes, Deborah Rappazzo, Hope Metzler, Corey Lewis, Beth Burgess, Daniel Phelan, Donna Nelson, Julie Schablitsky, Glenn Easton, Tina Simmons

MHT Staff Present: Gregory Brown

OAG Staff Present: Adam Snyder, Lucy Laudeman

Members of the Public: Lance McPherson, Baltimore County Genealogical Society; Katie Mettler, Washington Post.

The meeting came to order at 12:03 PM

I. Meeting Minutes

Mr. Phelan made a motion to approve the June 16, 2025 meeting minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Mr. Easton and approved unanimously.

Mr. Easton made a motion to approve the July 11, 2025 meeting minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Mr. Phelan and approved unanimously.

II. Cemetery and Burial Site Definitions – Discussion

- Legal Context for the Definition of Terms in Statute – Adam Snyder, OAG

Mr. Snyder explained that the General Assembly only defines terms when they appear in statute. He advised that the Working Group is free to recommend that the General Assembly enact definitions of any and all terms that are of interest, but from a legal perspective, defining terms that don't appear in statute is of little to no effect. He noted that the Working Group could also recommend that no changes are needed to the existing statutory definitions, if so desired.

The Working Group reviewed the specific language of SB354 related to this matter which states that the Working Group shall “*identify and review the various definitions of the terms “cemetery”, “burial group”, “burial site”, and any related terms in the Maryland Annotated Code and recommend a single definition for each term;*”

- Harmonization of definitions - Discussion

The Working Group reviewed the spreadsheet prepared by Ms. Laudeman who found that definitional inconsistencies exist for “burial site;” there is no definition in statute for “burial ground;” and there are multiple definitions of “cemetery” in statute. The term “burial group” does not appear in statute. Her spreadsheet also includes 13 other terms that the Working Group identified as “related terms” that should be explored.

Ms. Metzler noted that “burial group,” although specifically cited in SB354, was not a familiar term. Mr. Easton suggested that this term is not one that the group needs to define due to its lack of use in statute.

Ms. Hughes suggested that the Working Group consider creating a subcommittee to focus on developing recommendations regarding terms and their definitions. Mr. Easton, Ms. Burgess, Ms. Metzler and Dr. Schablitsky volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.

III. Cemetery Inventory Prototype in ArcGIS

Mr. Brown presented a prototype showing what a map-based cemetery inventory developed in ArcGIS could look like. He developed the prototype using cemetery data provided to him by Ms. Simmons for Calvert County. The cemetery sites show up as points rather than polygons in his prototype since polygon boundary data can be challenging to collect. He noted that ArcGIS would allow the viewer to use different types of map base layers. The link to the map prototype is here:

<https://maryland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/cc06ccd5584e4ed0bb08efb5b8a0c1d2>

Mr. Brown then shared a map-based cemetery inventory that is being developed by the Alabama Historical Commission. The Alabama inventory has a filter panel that allows the viewer to search cemeteries based on a variety of data categories which is what he would envision developing for the Maryland inventory. One of the tasks of the Working Group will be to identify what data fields are desired. The link to the Alabama Historical Commission map is here:

https://alabama-historic-preservation-gis-portal-alabama.hub.arcgis.com/datasets/b4b0c4386d1b4c139897b126ac953ea5_1/explore

Mr. Brown stated that where the cemetery data lives, how it is managed and how it is updated are questions that the Working Group would need to answer before deciding on the inventory system it would recommend as part of its report. He noted that once the building phase is complete, resources necessary to maintain and continue to update the inventory would need to be identified.

Mr. Brown explained that the most complete cemetery data that we have presently has been provided by the Office of Cemetery Oversight. However, of those 5,300 records, only 2400 have a street address that can be used to map the cemeteries. GIS can find addresses for approximately 80% of those cemeteries using geocoding but if there is no address provided at all then mapping will be a challenge.

Mr. Easton inquired how many states are using ArcGIS and whether there are alternative programs. Mr. Brown indicated that almost all State Historic Preservation Offices use ArcView because there are no longer any competitors in the marketplace. MHT would not want to use a

proprietary product since this product is the state of the art and, since we already have a state license, there is no cost for its use.

Mr. Phelan asked if ArcGIS uses excel or access databases. Mr. Brown responded that it can connect to outside databases but they must be accessible via the web and therefore must be safer than access. MHT would recommend connecting an existing access database to the MHT SQL server database as a mechanism for importing the data.

IV. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will focus on a discussion of preferred data fields for the cemetery inventory and will be a virtual meeting scheduled for August 4th at 12 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 1:02 PM.