

Maryland Inventory of Cemeteries and Burial Sites Working Group
Meeting 5 – August 22, 2025 at 12:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

Working Group Members Present: Elizabeth Hughes, Beth Burgess, Daniel Phelan, Donna Nelson, Glenn Easton, Tina Simmons, Christiana Limniatis, Mark Edwards, Corey Lewis, Deborah Rappazzo

MHT Staff Present: Gregory Brown, Matt McKnight, Zachary Singer

OAG Staff Present: Adam Snyder

Members of the Public: Lance McPherson, Eileen McGuckian

The meeting came to order at 12:03 PM

I. Meeting Minutes

Ms. Limniatis made a motion to approve the August 8, 2025 meeting minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Mr. Easton and approved unanimously.

II. Cemetery Inventory Data Fields – Discussion

Cemetery Inventory Data Fields

The group reviewed the cemetery inventory data field categories proposed for a statewide cemetery inventory database which were developed during the August 8th meeting for accuracy and adjustment.

The group discussed whether the inventory form should include a question for the submitter regarding permission to release the information to the public and who has authority to make that decision. Considerations include what data is already available to the public on SDAT or sites like Find a Grave and what would be considered public information based on the provisions of the Public Information Act. The group did not come to a decision on how to address this issue – Ms. Hughes will research what other states do and will report back to the group at the next meeting.

In addition, the group made the following decisions:

- Section 2: Eliminate ADC map data question
- Section 3: Eliminate cemetery setting question
- Section 3: Add yes or no question to address whether or not the cemetery is a perpetual care cemetery.
- Section 3: Change “number of marked graves” and “number of unmarked graves” from a fill in the blank to a drop down menu with ranges of numbers (e.g. 1-10; 11-30; etc.) as some states do.

- Section 3: Change language of yes or no question “is cemetery still active” to “are burials ongoing at this cemetery” and add a fill in the blank if “yes” is selected so that the burial activity level can be described.
- Section 5: Add alternate cemetery inventory number question with a drop down menu including OCO registration number, county inventory number, and “other” category selections that include a fill in the blank space where the number can be added when the category is selected so that a researcher can follow up with those entities to learn more.

Cemetery Data Field Drop Down Menu

The group made the following changes to the proposed drop down menu:

- Section 3: Questions regarding “cemetery type”, “religious cemetery” and “veterans” cemetery need to be reworked. Ms. Limniatis volunteered to research this item and recommend an approach at the next meeting.
- Section 3: Restricted access menu options should include only “Public Access” or “By permission only”
- Section 3: Cemetery boundary question should be a yes or no question – is the cemetery boundary marked or not?
- Section 3: Cemetery condition – this is useful information to include but can be subjective. For this reason, the inventory guidance should clearly define provided terms (e.g. what is meant by “good” vs “fair” condition) and the definitions should be worded carefully to avoid offense.
- Section 3: Type of ownership – menu options used by Texas appear to be the best fit for this category.

III. Cemetery and Burial Site Definitions – Subcommittee Report

Mr. Easton and Ms. Burgess reported on the work of the Definitions Subcommittee. The Subcommittee identified and reviewed the various definitions of terms found in the Maryland Annotated Code and other documents with the goal of recommending a single word definition for each term and identifying synonyms that may be seen or used in other contexts.

TERM 1 – The term for a place reserved for the final disposition of one or multiple human or pet remains.

The subcommittee agreed that the word “**Cemetery**” is best suited for this term.

Known synonyms include: Burial Ground(s), Graveyard, Burial Park, Burial Site, Memorial Park, Scattering Garden, Mausoleum, Columbarium, Potter’s Field, and Ossuary.

TERM 2 – The term for the individual place reserved for the final disposition of a single human or pet remains.

The majority of the subcommittee agreed that the word “**Burial Site**” is best suited for this term. The dissenting opinion felt that the word “Site” could connote multiple burial spaces.

Known synonyms include: Grave, Burial Space, Plot, Space, Grave Space, Crypt, Niche, Tomb, Vault, and Ossuary.

The group discussed whether the term might be adjusted to mean the final disposition of “**one or more**” human or pet remains.

TERM 3 – The term for the act of the final disposition of a single human or pet remains.

The subcommittee agreed that the word “**Interment**” is best suited for this term.

Known synonyms include: Burial, Entombment, Inurnment, Inhumation, and Re-Interment.

The Subcommittee welcomes the identification of additional synonyms for these terms.

The next step will be to consult with the Office of the Attorney General regarding what must be done, if anything, to codify the definition of these terms in statute as proposed since definitions already exist for these terms that are different from those provided here.

IV. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will continue the discussion of preferred data fields and the drop down menu for the cemetery inventory. The meeting will be virtual and is scheduled for Thursday, September 4 at 11 am.

Meeting adjourned at 1:12 PM.