

Maryland Inventory of Cemeteries and Burial Sites Working Group
Meeting 7 – September 18, 2025 at 11:00 AM
Virtual Meeting

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

MHT Staff Present: Gregory Brown

OAG Staff Present: Adam Snyder

OCO Staff Present: Dreama Anderson

Members of the Public: Lance McPherson

The meeting came to order at 11:03 PM

I. Meeting Minutes

Ms. Limniatis made a motion to approve the September 4, 2025 meeting minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Ms. Simmon and approved unanimously.

II. Cemetery Grant Program Proposal – Discussion

Mr. Edwards summarized the recommendations provided in the meeting packet by Mr. Edwards and Ms. McGuckian. He described the various recommendations, noting a couple of main points for discussion.

Secondary Focus-Cadaver dogs: Mr. Edwards noted that there has been some subsequent input from Drs. McKnight and Singer of MHT suggesting that cadaver dogs are generally not effective tools in general, and specifically that they should only be used in conjunction with or following geophysical testing by an archaeologist, which is another of the secondary focus items. Mr. Edwards noted that, with everyone's approval, that particular secondary focus area would be removed from that section.

Funding Match: Mr. Edwards noted that the match amount in the document was left blank, but proposed a 25% match to start, with the possibility of changing this over time. Ms. Limniatis noted that in her experience 25% may be too high, in many cases for some organizations even 10% is difficult. It was suggested that this may be a topic of later finalization, with perhaps some type of leeway based on the type of organization applying (applications from churches or family cemeteries, for example). Ms. Limniatis noted that they are moving toward applicants partnering with “funding sponsors,” and Mr. Edwards also noted that the match requirements were written to allow for a variety of match types, including volunteers or in-kind services. It was noted that we may be able to allow a waive of match for private or family cemeteries, although there was some concern with making it too easy to avoid the match.

Eligible Activities: Ms. Limniatis asked why the program should be limited to non-capital as opposed to capital projects. Mr. Edwards responded that the types of programs proposed to be funded were mainly non-capital, and it was unlikely that we would want the program to be open to larger capital projects, especially given the proposed grant fund allocation.

Eligible Applicants: Ms. Limniatis asked whether the applicant pool would require a 501(c)(3) non-profit, and Mr. Edwards noted that the document specifically states that 501(c)(3) status is not required, since certain applicants for these grants - churches and cemetery preservation organizations - may not meet that requirement. Ms. Simmons asked whether private family cemeteries would be eligible, and Mr. Easton asked about churches. The group agreed that both should be eligible.

Ms Limniatis suggested, to general agreement, that significance should be a primary selection criterion.

Funding Level: Mr. Edwards stated in his presentation that the initial proposed level of the fund would be \$250,000, subject to later change. He stated that funds may come from state “general funds” or special funds, but that general funds may be difficult to secure in the current budget climate. He stated that special funds may be obtainable through working with the Chesapeake Bay Trust or using the special license plate program, if implemented in the future.

Later Discussion of Primary Focus Areas: Ms Simmons noted the importance of working with Taxation and Assessment to try to get cemeteries added to the SDAT database, and there was brief discussion about possibility using some of the money as a gifted lump sum to that program if need be.

III. Overall Managing Entity - Discussion

Ms. Hughes submitted a memo in the meeting packet suggesting the management structure for the overall database and GIS application. This memo proposed that MHT would be the primary custodian of the database at this point, with the possibility of eventually moving it to the Maryland State Archives for long-term management and/or sharing access to the database between MHT, MSA, and OCO. The OCO registration database will obviously need to stay in place, to handle registration fees and auditing, but the primary data used in the public-facing application would come from the MHT/MSA database, which is the one that will be updated with incoming new information or batches of existing data from other sources.

The funds proposed in this memo are largely intended to fund a person or persons to be the day-to-day manager of this database, accepting and checking incoming information, maintaining the database, and perhaps managing the grant program. It was left undecided whether this position, if funded, would reside within MHT, MSA, or OCO (though probably one of the former two, as OCO does not have sufficient IT support).

During discussion, Mr. Edwards suggested that we may want to preserve a small (ca. \$25,000?) stipend fund for a “review committee” to evaluate incoming submissions.

IV. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will include a presentation from Mr. Brown, Ms. Limniatis, and Ms. Simmons on the public-facing GIS map-based application, with a list of fields that would be used for searching and filtering, and perhaps any fields that we may want to track in the overall database but hide from public view (internal comments, etc.). The meeting will be virtual and is scheduled for Thursday, October 9 at 11 am.

Meeting adjourned at 11:48 AM.