



NORTH CAROLINA
BOARD OF FUNERAL SERVICE

Minutes
NC Crematory Authority Meeting
December 30, 2019

The North Carolina Crematory Authority met for a duly scheduled meeting at 1:00 p.m. on December 30, 2019, at the NC Board of Funeral Service located at 1033 Wade Avenue, Suite 108, Raleigh, North Carolina.

Present: Stephen Davis, NCBFS Executive Director; Amy Mauldin, NCBFS Assistant Director

Present via Conference Call: Chris Headley [National Cremation Service], Chair; Steve Hundley [Morris Funeral Home and Cremation Service], Secretary; Robert Dodson [Triad Cremation Society and Chapel].

Mr. Davis opened the meeting on behalf of the Chair at 1:10 p.m. and introduced the agenda items which included:

- 2019 NC Crematory Authority Election Results
- 2020 Election Results for the NC Board of Funeral Service
- Online Third Party Providers of Cremations

Mr. Davis announced to the Authority the results of the 2019 election to fill three (3) open seats on the Authority. He noted that the Board sent nomination forms out to all cremation licensees in October 2019 with a total of three (3) nominations received. He reported that the nominees were Steven Hundley, Morris Funeral and Cremation Care, Asheville, NC; Craig Tomczak, Pines Cremations Services, Carthage, NC; and Chris Headley, National Cremation Service, Charlotte, NC. He noted that since there were three (3) nominees for three (3) open seats, the Board approved the nominees for appointment to the Authority as prescribed by statute.

Mr. Davis then reported the results of the Board's election of officers at the December 11, 2019, Board meeting. He stated that the newly elected NC Board of Funeral Service officers are: Mark Blake, Brown-Wynne Funeral Home, Raleigh, NC, President; Don Brown, Don Brown's Funeral Home, Ayden, NC, Vice President; and Chris Watson, Parrish Funeral Home, Selma, NC, Secretary.

OnLine Third-Party Providers

Mr. Headley asked Mr. Davis to introduce the agenda item regarding online third-party providers of cremation services. Mr. Davis conveyed to the Authority that he had received in early December an alert from The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards information that he wanted to share with Authority members. According to the alert, an online marketing organization

known as Heritage Cremation Provider, an internet-based third party intermediary operating under the name “Families First Funeral Home and Funeral Services” and “Legacy Funeral Services” is now operating as “The Funeral Group.” Davis reminded members that the NC Board of Funeral Service won injunctive relief in the courts against Heritage in 2016 disallowing their operation since they are not licensed to practice in North Carolina. He noted that the Board notified licensees in NC that providing third-party services through arrangement with Heritage and its affiliates or any unlicensed provider is considered aiding and abetting unlicensed practice.

Davis continue his report by noting that WSOC-TV in Charlotte, NC and Rock Hill, SC had recently aired an investigative report concerning Heritage and a family that arranged for a cremation through their online service. He stated that it was important for the Authority to be fully aware of these circumstances in their advisory capacity to the Board.

Mr. Headley noted that recent cases in Georgia concerning Heritage and similar providers affirmed a trend for marketing companies to use online services to offer discounted cremations to consumers. He noted that a recent case in Ohio resulted in a family receiving sand in lieu of cremated remains for a deceased family member, and he noted the need for regulation of these third-party providers.

Mr. Dodson agreed and recounted similar circumstances when families used online providers. Mr. Headley questioned if other states had developed and implemented regulations and enforcement practices to assure proper oversight of third-party providers in their locations.

Mr. Davis stated that he was not aware of any state regulations but noted that several states have pursued legal action in responding to Heritage operations in their states. He also noted that the topic was discussed at length in the 2019 Annual Meeting of The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards.

Mr. Hundley noted that the strategic use of social media and increased involvement of various mainstream media outlets could be effective channels for educating consumers and making them aware of the risks associated with using third-party online providers for cremation services. Members continued their discussion and agreed that the Board should continue its efforts to inform, educate and protect consumers with regard to online third-party providers of cremation services.

Alternative Disposition Methods

Members then discussed an issue that Mr. Davis reported regarding alternative disposition methods in lieu of more traditional earth burial or cremation practices. He conveyed information that the Board will consider and discuss regarding human composting and promession. Both are alternative methods of disposition of dead human bodies, and Davis noted that the State of Washington has enacted legislation allowing human composting as a legal method for disposition. Members discussed this issue and noted that these alternative practices represented emerging trends in funeral service that will require the Board’s awareness, consideration and response in the future.

Conclusion

In concluding the meeting, members discussed the development of a meeting schedule for 2020 and thought that a joint meeting with the Board would prove beneficial. Mr. Headley asked whether or not the new Authority members would be sworn in as in the past. Ms. Mauldin responded that official swearing in of new Authority members is not necessary since their appointments will be confirmed by affidavit. She noted that the Board would send each new member an affidavit to affirm their appointment to the Authority in early 2020.

Without further business before the Authority, the Chair adjourned the meeting.