

FALL 2024

Current News and Comments from the Pennsylvania
Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association



KEY NEWS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Growing up, my family traversed the state in a station wagon pulling a horse trailer to race at Pennsylvania's many county fairs. I learned to love this state as we headed down two-lane highways following the summer racing schedule. Looking out to see corn growing, my father would always praise the farmer's industry. He was quick to point out that farming and procrastination did not mix. "Procrastination is the grave in which opportunity is buried," he would say.

An appropriate lead-in to tell you not to procrastinate about signing-up for our 2024 Fall Conference hosted by Laurel Hill, one of PA's premier Funeral Home/Cemetery/Arboretum combinations. The conference dates are October 20th and 21st. This is the first conference in the Philadelphia area since we were in Valley Forge ten years ago. Pick your reason to attend: a content rich, robust speakers' program; an easy networking environment with other Pennsylvania cemeterians; a tour of the two, historic Laurel Hill cemeteries that continue to reimagine their purpose to meet today's consumer and add civic value to their community. You can find registration online at pccfa.com.

The board of PCCFA has directed the newsletter committee to make our Summer (August) newsletter both digital and paper. This communication can only be effective for you as the information we have in our files. Please do not hesitate to update your contact information with me as your personnel or volunteers change. You can email me at pccfa.exec.team@gmail.com.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's heritage and the families you serve, thank you for your everyday efforts and remember, don't procrastinate! I look forward to seeing you in October in Philadelphia.

Ernest L. Petersen, III
President

DON'T MISS THIS CHANCE TO TOUR HISTORIC LAUREL HILL: FALL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

By Nancy Goldenberg, Laurel Hill · Host of the 2024 Fall Conference

2024 PCCFA Fall Conference – October 20-21, 2024

This year's new location is Philadelphia, PA – Hosted by Laurel Hill

Don't miss this rare opportunity to take an insider's tour of Laurel Hill, a national historic landmark, accredited Level II arboretum, and one of Pennsylvania's premiere cemetery/funeral home/arboretum combinations. Laurel Hill's 265 acres, on both sides of the Schuylkill River, is home to about 200,000 permanent residents, from signers of the Declaration of Independence and Civil War generals to titans of industry, athletes, artists and academicians. Laurel Hill is a global leader in sustainability, claiming the first and only SITES gold level green burial area in the world. Its funeral home is also a green certified, state-of-the-art facility serving all funeral homes with the highest of standards and offering traditional, green burial and cremation, as well as alkaline hydrolysis and burial options for pets. Laurel Hill also offers on-site event space with approved caterers for memorial services, receptions, and a wide variety of public and private events.

Registration is open now until September 30, 2024, at pccfa.com. Member/Supplier registration is \$545 and includes Sunday reception and dinner, Monday coffee break and lunch. Spouse/Guest registration is \$445 and includes meals. There are many sponsorships available this year, including:

- Platinum Sponsor – \$2,500 – includes sponsorship of entire conference, including opening reception/dinner, lunches and coffee breaks
- Gold Sponsor – \$1,500 – includes conference sponsorship and opening reception/dinner
- Silver Sponsor – \$1,000 – includes conference sponsorship and Monday lunch
- Bronze – \$500 – conference sponsor

Sponsors will have an opportunity to table and will be recognized in remarks and on signage.

We have an exciting lineup of speakers this year and are working hard with our host to ensure this conference is a hands-on experience that includes tours, networking, and behind-the-scenes guidance for anything and everything you would like to learn about to take back to your own organizations.

To view the agenda, please [click here](#).

Or, see more about the conference on the next page including our robust speaker sessions! ➡

A LINEUP OF ROBUST SESSIONS

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By Nancy Goldenberg, Laurel Hill · Host of the 2024 Fall Conference

Burial Trends and Consumer Expectations in 2024

Presented by Nick Timpe, webCemeteries

How are burials trending across the country and in Pennsylvania in 2024? In this session, Nick Timpe, CEO of webCemeteries and Dean of ICCFA University College of Technology, will provide a quick evaluation of real burial trend data, and discuss consumer expectations that feed into these trends.

Act 135: A Strategy for Saving Cemeteries

Presented by Thaddeus Squire, Social Impact Commons

In 2008, Pennsylvania established the Abandoned and Blighted Property Conservatorship Act (Act 135) to tackle the challenges many older communities suffered from blighted properties that were abandoned by their owners and posed a public safety threat and nuisance to their communities. But could this law also apply to cemeteries across the Commonwealth? Hear from Thaddeus Squire, a leader in the field of systems design for nonprofit resource sharing and the Chief Commons Steward at Social Impact Commons, on his experience testing Act 135's application at Mt. Vernon Cemetery in Philadelphia.

To Honor a Life: The Roles of Doulas, Directors and Celebrants

Presented by Patricia Quigley, Laurel Hill Funeral Home's Supervisor; Russ Alexander, Sunset Companions; Tasha Dugan, Laurel Hill's funeral director; and Rosemary Connors, Life Celebrant

We expect care, compassion and celebration when bringing a new life into the world. Shouldn't we expect the same in death? Learn about the complementary roles that a death doula, funeral director and celebrant play in death care in this thought-provoking panel discussion led by Laurel Hill Funeral Home's Supervisor, Patricia Quigley. Joining her is death doula Russ Alexander, cofounder of Sunset Companions; Tasha Dugan, Laurel Hill's funeral director; and Rosemary Connors, who for over 13 years has been a privileged partner in officiating celebrations of life with meaning and depth.

A Taphophile's Tour of Laurel Hill

Presented by the staff of Laurel Hill

Laurel Hill is a taphophile's dream, so lace up your shoes and join an afternoon tour of this historic cemetery, arboretum and sculpture garden. This 265-acre open space in both Philadelphia and Montgomery counties is the permanent home of about 200,000 residents, from Civil War generals and signers of the Declaration of Independence to titans of industry, famous athletes, artists and academicians. Besides enjoying the grounds (and our state champion trees), you'll get a first-hand look at Laurel Hill's aquamation center, green burial areas, and original 1836 gatehouse, currently under rehabilitation.

DEP REVISES CREMATORY PERMITS AND ISSUES GUIDANCE ON TEMPERATURES

By Jason G. Benion, Esq., Saxton & Stump

We previously noted the passage of the Crematory Regulation Act, which prohibits the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection from requiring in a general permit that a crematory operate at greater than 1600 degrees Fahrenheit, effectively lowering the previous 1800-degree standard.

In light of this legislation, on August 10, DEP published notice of a new GP-14 general air quality permit for crematories and guidance on how the temperature change will be implemented.

Starting August 16, the Act's effective date, DEP will enforce a temperature requirement of 1600°F, rather than 1800°F, for any crematory currently operating under the prior GP-14 permit. DEP will also apply the 1600°F standard to crematories currently holding a "state-only" operating permit.

DEP also announced that it will no longer enforce the condition of the old GP-14 permit, which prohibits opening the charge door during a cremation cycle. Both GP-14 and state-only permit holders are now allowed to open the door for short periods of time to inspect or reposition remains. DEP recommends that operators keep records of the time, date and duration of when the charge door is opened.

Finally, DEP noted that it has removed from the new GP-14 all conditions related to charging the primary chamber before the secondary chamber exit temperature is established and holding at the required temperature, effectively eliminating the requirement that the crematory be "preheated" before starting cremation.

Going forward, these new standards and several other changes will be incorporated into the new GP-14 general permit for human or animal crematories. It is anticipated that DEP will apply these same standards to state-only crematories going forward as well.

If you have any questions about the implementation of the new crematory temperature standards or DEP permitting please contact me at jgb@saxtonstump.com or call (717) 941-1208 any time.

PAC AND LEGAL DEFENSE FUNDS

Who works with our state representatives to protect your business, consumer grievances and protects us from overly burdensome laws? PCCFA does!

Support our efforts with your personal donation to the PCCFA PAC Fund. If you want to support PCCFA, with a business contribution, consider donating to the Legal Defense Fund.

For more information, contact Ernie Petersen at (814) 243-3837 or e-mail pccfa.exec.team@gmail.com

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CONSUMER RELATIONS

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By Harry C. Neel, Consumer Complaint Committee

I used to encourage my team to develop “elevator” speeches for use when interacting with clients. An elevator speech is a single-purpose, precise response to a family’s inquiry that can be said in an “elevator ride.” A former associate used to describe anxiety as an unprepared mind and mouth. An elevator speech should give any employee a confidence in responding rather than reacting to consumer inquiries and complaints.

While a little longer than a normal elevator speech, I thought we should share a recent response to a call that came in on our Consumer Inquiry line. Please note how in his response to the inquiry, Consumer Affairs Chairman Neel starts with empathy. This connects the caller and responder. Then comes the explanation, and then empathy again. If our teams can learn this connect-facts-connect approach, the consumer may not be happy with what we tell them, but they know we listened and could relate to their situation.

Here was the response: “Thank you for the time you took to contact PCCFA and ask about this. My father, too, was a WWII combat veteran. I am also a veteran of 21 years. Therefore, I certainly understand your concern. Is there a family member’s marker involved or is it just a general comment?”

Here are some facts you may not be aware of: The US Government does give a veteran a memorial. But that is the extent of the government’s involvement. They ship a marker to a cemetery. As you may imagine someone must install it. It may require a concrete foundation to be dug out and concrete poured or a base to be attached or both to be installed. There may be other legitimate cemetery charges that must be paid (the same as if the cemetery sold the marker itself). These fees, often adding up to as much as \$300 to \$650 or more, are paid by the family. There was a time when many funeral directors thought they were doing the family a service by applying for this “free veteran marker”. Only to find the family did not want the individual marker they wanted a double for husband and wife. Then the cemetery is required to return the marker to the VA for destruction. A double waste of taxpayers’ money.

Therefore, when the cemetery tells you they have not been installed because the family has not paid for them to be installed, they are telling you the truth. No business can afford to spend hundreds of dollars of labor and material doing something they have not been paid to do.

I suspect this is not what you wanted or expected to hear. Based upon the facts you relayed to me this is why the markers are not installed.”



**FALL
CONFERENCE**

Save the Date!

2024 PCCFA Fall Conference

October 20-21, 2024 in Philadelphia

Hosted by Laurel Hill Cemetery!



PA FUNERAL BOARD UPDATE & MUSHROOM COFFINS

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By Jason G. Benion, Esq., Saxton & Stump

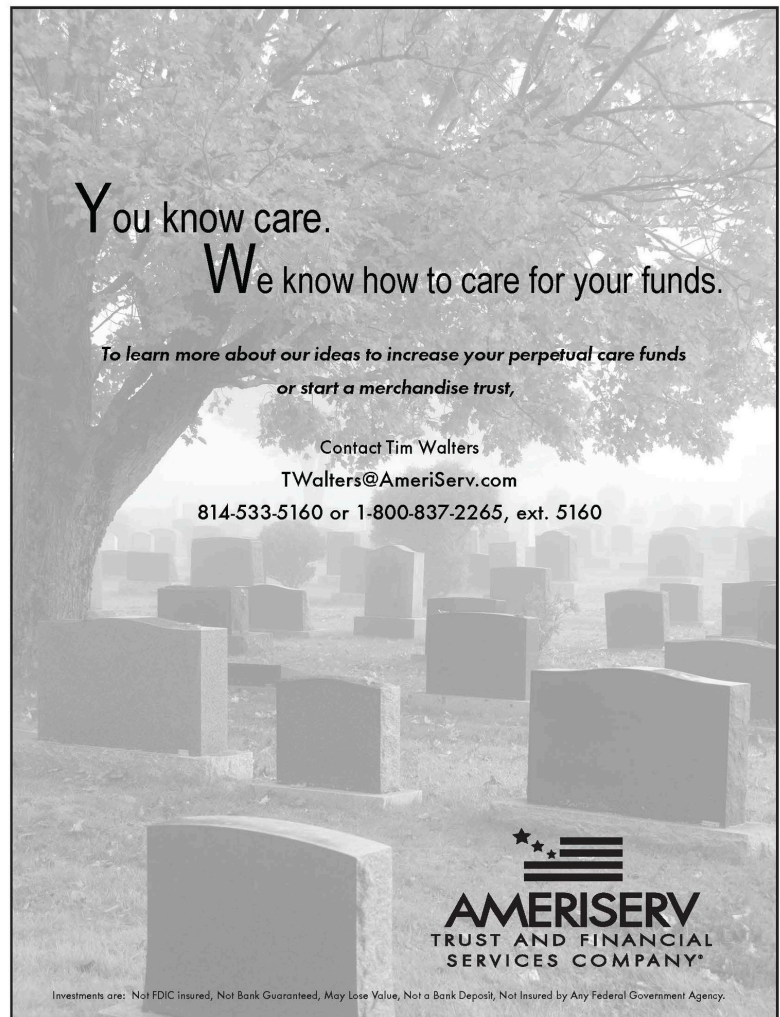
August saw a short meeting for the Pennsylvania State Board of Funeral Directors and the announcement that the nation's first mushroom caskets are now available from a Pennsylvania farm.

At its August 7 meeting, the Board granted the prosecution's motion to deem admitted the allegations against Brittany Thomas, trading and doing business as Moskal-Reid Funeral Home, and that funeral home's nominal supervisor, Richard T. Wolfe. An order to show cause had alleged, among other things, that Thomas engaged in the unlicensed practice of funeral directing, forged a customer signature on an insurance assignment and Wolfe's signature on contracts, and submitted false bills to customers and insurance claims. Neither Thomas nor Wolfe responded to the allegations, and the Board will now decide their penalties.

The Board also reiterated that it would discuss the exposure draft of its general revisions package of regulations at its Oct. 30 meeting and invited interested parties' input. The Board also noted that it is monitoring House Bill 919, which would legalize natural organic reduction.

Green death care in Pennsylvania took another step forward this month as Setas Mushrooms farm in Franklin County introduced its living coffin, a biodegradable coffin made from a blend of fungus and hemp. The coffins are designed to facilitate the natural decomposition process and completely breakdown in less than two and a half years. Coffins are available for \$1,995 and urns for \$995.


If you have any questions about the Funeral Board or green funerals, please contact me at jgb@saxtonstump.com or call (717) 941-1208 any time.



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ONLINE MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

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PCCFA members can now renew their membership instantly online! For all new members, once your application and reviewed and approved by the executive team, an account/login will be created automatically after you make your first membership payment.

>>> BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

- The eKeynews, a four times a year publication, delivered by e-mail.
- Two conferences a year with continuing education credits for funeral directors at PA locations. (Every other year, our fall conference is held in Atlantic City with four other states and there the education program provides credits and certifications.
- A discount on the MemorialPro insurance product from the Regan Agency, Inc.
- Constant Contact available for rapid communications. Suppliers take note!
- Access to our supplier members network.
- The PCCFA complaint hotline helping us help cemeteries with consumer issues.
- An annual legislative reception, to make sure your representatives know they can come to us for assistance with pending legislation and constituent issues.
- A lobbyist looking out for our best interests in Harrisburg.
- Access to other cemeterians to network and brainstorm amid the changing and evolving death care industry. Green burials, spotted lantern fly, etc.

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