**Exploring Government Oversight of the Death Care Industry**

My **project log** is here (please note that there are multiple tabs): <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wJiyLqUx2i2YtEJE7F97OT7KUX-YosbKdVR2489Z2Lc/>

I have continued to follow-up with the **Board of Morticians** and the **Office of Cemetery Oversight** regarding their databases.

**I am no longer pursuing the BoM angle.** After speaking with the Thomas Anderson, the BoM inspector, directly, I determined that the BoM **does not keep electronic records** of their inspections. I was a bit suspicious, but Deborah Rappazo, the executive director at the OCO, confirmed that before she started working at her agency a few years ago, it did not keep electronic records, either.

**Progress at the OCO:** Rappazo at the OCO sent a [detailed response letter](https://drive.google.com/file/d/13maNAB5elobKtn7zEVh0d4wpyiFrTmXU/view?usp=sharing) to my initial inquiry (a link to which is also included in my contact log). In that letter and a follow-up phone conversation, she explained **three different databases** relevant to my request.

**Available Databases:**

1. A database of **all cemeteries licensed by the OCO**, stored in a Db2 database (Db2 is an IBM database management system), referred to internally as AS-400. It stores the following information:
   1. **registration number** for inter-system identification
   2. **license number**, the outward-facing, publicly-accessible identification number
   3. **license expiration date**
   4. a numerical **license category**, around 2-dozen categories, but only 8 of those are for cemeteries. Rappazo said she will provide me with a **key** to the license categories, so we *need to remember to include this in the request*.
   5. **name** of the licensee, which may be an individual or a company, and which would be *redacted* (Rappazo said she didn’t know why the name needs to be redacted when the address is not.)
   6. **address** of the licensee

Although the database is in a Db2 format, she said her office would provide the information requested by generating **excel spreadsheets from the database**.

I need to verify but am fairly certain this includes only the few hundred cemeteries the OCO licenses, not any of the thousands of entities outside their oversight.

1. A **record of complaints** against all cemeteries, including those over which the OCO has no official oversight authority, stored in an Excel spreadsheet, with the following fields:
   1. **date** of complaint (only non-pending complaints)
   2. cemetery **name**
   3. **type** of complaint
   4. **type** of cemetery
   5. blurb of the **complaint itself**
   6. **result**, whether resolved or not
   7. how **resolved**
2. A **record of disinterments** within the same cemetery, stored in an excel spreadsheet—does not include moves from one cemetery to another, with the following fields:
   1. **date** of filing (or is it of the disinterment? I need to verify)
   2. **requester**, may be *redacted*
   3. from and to **locations** (name of cemetery and location of plot)

This record **does not include disinterments from one cemetery to another**. For that, we need to ask the state **Attorney General’s office**. I told Rappazo we may still request this from her office as well, for the sake of completeness.

**Other points of note:**

1. While I was asking her what was stored in each database, Rappazo kept saying “what would be open for me to give you,” implying **there may be other fields she did not name because** she already knows she must redact them before providing the records.
2. I told Rappazo we were primarily **interested in cemeteries, not monument companies**. So unless I tell her otherwise, the provided records will only include the cemeteries.
3. The OCO **does not conduct regular inspections**. Rappazo said she is hoping to set up an inspection process.
4. **Crematoriums** are under BoM oversight.
5. BoM executive director Gail V. Tucker has only been at the office for 7 weeks. She warmed up to my requests after our first conversation.
6. Rappazo has been working at the COM for many years and said she answers requests similar to mine frequently from media organizations.
7. Rappazo **keeps asking what I need the databases for**, in order to help determine what information she has that would be helpful. I told her I am doing an overview of the deathcare industry in MD and just trying to see what information her office has.
8. The **Maryland Cemetery, Funeral, and Cremation Association** may be helpful for future reporting. Contact info is in the Organizations tab of the Project Log.
9. I’ve started looking at **old articles about cemetery complaints**. They are stored on the Resources tab of the Project Log.