The Conference Holds 110th Annual Meeting

The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards held its 110th Annual Meeting February 26 - 27, 2014, at The Caribe Royale All-Suite Hotel and Convention Center in Orlando, Florida. The two day event focused on regulation in the death care profession and was attended by members of the regulatory community from throughout the United States and Canada.

This year The Conference continued the popular Board Member Training program. The seminar, led by Dale Atkinson, of Atkinson & Atkinson, LLC., familiarized regulatory board members with the roles and responsibilities of serving on a funeral service regulatory board. Seminar topics included: the role of a regulatory board member, political realities of boards, adjunction/discipline/enforcement, the licensure examination, and other current regulatory issues. Attendees from 11 jurisdictions participated in small group discussions that focused on delegation of authority, board outreach, conflict of interest, social media, and immunity.

Wednesday morning included two pre-meeting sessions. The annual meeting of the Association of Executives of Funeral Service Boards (AEFSB) met for the 13th time during the Funeral Service Administrator’s Forum. The forum gave regulatory board executives an opportunity to discuss current issues in funeral service regulation with their peers from across North America.

The second pre-meeting session was the Examination Services Forum, led by Examination Services Manager Sarah Gill. Attendees were educated on the policies and procedures regarding the Conference exam program as well as future Conference initiatives.

The keynote speaker for the 110th Annual Meeting was Personal Effectiveness Professional, Dr. Susan Meyerle, who set the tone for the day with her presentation on “The Motivated Regulator.” During her presentation she focused on an array of topics including: the role of public protection, recognizing the personal professional benefits from regulatory experiences, and valuing contributions. Dr. Meyerle was able to use her expertise to relate to attendees while providing valuable insight regarding services to the regulatory profession.

The Annual Meeting was officially called to order that afternoon by President Bart Burton. Mr. Burton welcomed all regulators, educators, and funeral service professionals in attendance. Following the business meeting & luncheon, Lisa Hahn, Executive Director of the Virginia Board of...
Funeral Directors and Embalmers and current member of The Conference’s Model Practice Act Committee, updated attendees on the development and progress of the construction of the Model Practice Act for Funeral Service.

Immediately following Ms. Hahn’s presentation, Dale Atkinson held an informative session in which he described recent cases in the regulatory profession and discussed what can be learned from each. Mr. Atkinson, also updated the attendees on The Conference’s litigation involving American Academy of McAllister Institute, and responded to questions regarding the case.

President Burton closed the opening day by reporting on policy updates passed by the Board of Directors. He announced that effective March 1, 2014; the wait period between retaking the National Board Examination will be 90 days. President Burton also announced that effective July 1, 2014; candidates will receive their results electronically upon completion of an ABFSE program.

The second day began with a presentation on Alkaline Hydrolysis Regulation from A.R. “Sandy” Mahon, Registrar of the Funeral and Cremation Council of Saskatchewan. Mr. Mahon shared the process that his jurisdiction used to approach Alkaline Hydrolysis Regulation, and the legislation that was created following the adoption of the process. Mr. Mahon also discussed the difference between units that are currently manufactured, the policies and procedures implemented since the installation of the equipment, and consumers’ reactions to the process.

Dale Atkinson gave an overview of legislative updates for the second session of the day. This session featured recent legislative changes involving different professions. Using various cases as examples, Mr. Atkinson highlighted the influence on administrative policies, laws, and rules.

District meetings followed the morning sessions. These meetings gave attendees an opportunity to discuss issues and best practices with fellow regulators from other districts. Meeting topics included crematory regulation, funeral consultants, pre-need guarantees, and conference initiatives. During the district meetings, elections where held for districts two, three, four, seven, and eight.

Dr. Hari P. Close II, CFSP, from district two, and Robert C. Carter, CFSP, from district four were both elected to serve a second term. Peter Burke, CFSP, Executive Director of the North Carolina Board of Funeral Service, was elected to serve as district three director, Edward Muhleisen from the Louisiana State Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors was elected to serve as district seven director, and A.R. “Sandy” Mahon was elected to serve as district eight director after being appointed to fill the role in June, 2013.

Thursday afternoon kicked off with the annual awards luncheon. Following the district meeting and AEFSB reports, President Bart Burton presented Laura Zabel with the President’s Distinguished Service Award. Ms. Zabel, a 10-year exam committee member and 15-year meeting attendee, was recognized for her ongoing commitment and outstanding service to The Conference.

Bart Burton was elected to serve as President. Dr. Hari P. Close, II, CFSP, was elected to serve as Vice President, and Robert Carter was elected to serve as Secretary/ Treasurer. At the close of the awards luncheon, the 2014-2015 Board of Directors were officially sworn in.

The afternoon continued with three final sessions. The first presentation was given by Jim Puente with the National Council of State Boards of Nursing on the Nurse Licensure Compact. Mr. Puente discussed the process of establishing the compact and the benefits of having it in place. Following Mr. Puente, Robert Carter spoke on unlicensed activity in which he discussed how the Ohio Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors approaches the issue including sanctions, disciplinary actions, and outreach.

For the final session of the day, attendees were broken into eight teams for a group exercise. This year, the group exercise focused on the Model Practice Act for Funeral Service. Once attendees were divided into their teams, they were asked to review the work that had been drafted on specific sections of the Model Practice Act. At the end of the group exercise, each team reported on the clarity and consistency of language, potential problematic areas, and additional considerations for the Model Practice Act Committee to consider. At the conclusion of the Annual Meeting, President Burton thanked everyone for making this year’s meeting a success and invited everyone to the 111th Annual Meeting in Dallas, Texas.
District Directors Elected

The Conference welcomes three new members to its Board of Directors following district elections at the 110th Annual Meeting. Peter Burke, CFSP, was elected to represent district three, Edward Muheisen was elected to represent district seven, and Sandy Mahon was elected to represent district eight.

Mr. Burke is the Executive Director of the North Carolina Board of Funeral Service. He represents funeral service regulators from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

Mr. Burke graduated Cum Laude from American Academy McAllister Institute, and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from William Paterson University of New Jersey, and a Masters of Business Administration Finance from Fairleigh Dickinson University. He is mortuary officer of the Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT), and was DMORT Region IV team member of the year in 2011. Mr. Burke is a member of the Cary Parks Recreation and Cultural Resources Athletics Advisory Committee and is an off-ice official for the National Hockey League.

Edward Muheisen

As district seven director, Edward Muheisen represents funeral service regulators from Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. He is a board member of the Louisiana State Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors and is the Manager of L.A. Muheisen and Son Funeral Home, in Kenner, LA.

Mr. Muheisen graduated from Holy Cross High School in 1995 and from Louisiana State University in 2000. Mr. Muheisen attended mortuary science school at Dallas Institute of Funeral Service and graduated as salutatorian in 2002. His professional affiliations include: the National Funeral Directors Association, the Louisiana Funeral Directors Association, the Cremation Association of North America and Selected Independent Funeral Homes.

Sandy Mahon was appointed to The Conference Board of Directors in 2013. As district eight director he represents funeral service regulators from Alaska, Alberta, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Saskatchewan, Washington, and Wyoming. He has also served as both Secretary and Vice-President of The Association of Executives of Funeral Service Boards.

Mr. Mahon is the Registrar for the Funeral and Cremation Services Council of Saskatchewan and has been employed by the Council since 2005. He was formerly a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and retired at the rank of Sergeant Major. The latter part of his career in the RCMP was spent in a variety of training functions and he has a Certificate in Adult Education from St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Sandy and his wife, Katherine, reside in Regina, Saskatchewan.

National Board Exam Policy Changes

The Conference Board of Directors periodically reviews and revises policies regarding examination administration keeping in mind the security of the examination program as well as best practices within the field of high stakes licensure testing. At the Board of Directors meeting held February 25, 2014 the Board passed new policy changes for the National Board Examination.

1. As of March 1, 2014, candidates are required to wait 90 days between examination retake attempts. This policy change gives candidates an opportunity to allow sufficient time for study and remediation following an unsuccessful attempt on the NBE.

2. As of July 1, 2014, candidates will receive notification of their pass/fail status electronically from The Conference upon completion of an ABFSE accredited program.
New Online Features at Annual Meeting a Success

The Conference implemented new online features at the 110th Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida, in February. Attendees were able to access a wide range of options through user-friendly technology to improve their Annual Meeting experience. Attendees with a smartphone or tablet were able to access paperless documents including the meeting agenda, speaker bios, presentations, hotel maps, and online surveys.

Perhaps the most exciting online implementation at the Annual Meeting was the virtual continuing education registration system. Attendees were able to register for their continuing education credits by scanning a QR code or by following prompts in the meeting application and submitting an online form for each approved session.

The new online registration system was a well-received success with attendees and The Conference staff saw an increase in CE registration. Future plans include continuing the development of online features to improve the Annual Meeting experience while keeping in mind the different avenues necessary to encourage participation.

The Conference Awards NBE Scholarships

The Board of Directors of The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards has selected 10 recipients to receive the National Board Examination (NBE) Scholarship. Each ABFSE accredited program was asked to submit one candidate name to The Conference based on their own criteria.

Winners were selected at random during the Board of Directors meeting on February 25, 2014 in Orlando, Florida. The NBE Scholarship allows each recipient to sit for the NBE at no cost. The 2014 NBE Scholarship recipients are as follows:

- Claudette Delva, American River College
- Arielle Fouts, Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science
- Kandice Jacobs-Armstrong, Florida State College at Jacksonville
- Tanner Moore, Lake Washington Institute of Technology
- Jewel Murray, University of District of Columbia
- Domanik Phillips, Dallas Institute of Funeral Service
- Eric Smith, Wayne State University

Update on the Model Practice Act For Funeral Service

The Model Practice Act for Funeral Service is nearing the halfway mark of completion with jurisdictions anxiously awaiting the valuable endeavor. The Conference has committed time and resources toward the development of a Model Practice Act that will be used by its members.

The recent group exercise which occurred at the Annual Meeting provided the opportunity for several member boards to review some of the initial work by the committee members including draft sections. Licensing Standards for Funeral Directors, Embalmers, Crematory Operators, etc. as well as

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Online Eligibilities

The Conference is currently testing online capabilities for submitting candidate eligibility information. Once implemented, schools will be able to log into The Conference’s website, www.theconferenceonline.org, and submit candidate eligibility. One username and password will be assigned to each school. This login information is to be used only by a designated school official with authorization to release candidates to take the National Board Exam.

Schools will be directed to fill out one of two forms to release a candidate’s eligibility; one for candidates that have completed graduation requirements, the other for projected graduates. Multiple candidates may be submitted at a time. Once submitted, please allow normal processing time for the candidate’s file to be updated in The Conference’s system.

- Paula L. Sullivan, Northwest Mississippi Community College
- Lucas Dylan Teague, Ogeechee Technical College
- Bethany Wozniak, Mt. Hood Community College
Executive Committee Elected

New officers were elected to the Executive Committee of The Conference Board of Directors at the board meeting in Orlando, FL. Bart Burton was elected President, Dr. Hari P. Close, II, CFSP, was elected Vice President, and Robert Carter was elected Secretary/Treasurer.

Mr. Burton was appointed to The Conference Board of Directors in 2010 and was elected in 2011. He was elected Secretary/Treasurer in 2012 and Vice President in 2013. Mr. Burton has been serving as President of The Conference since October of 2013, finishing out the term of his predecessor. As district nine director, he represents funeral service regulators from Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, and Utah.

Mr. Burton was appointed to the Nevada State Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers in 2007. He is currently the manager of the Palm Mortuary Care Center in Las Vegas, Nevada. He has been employed at Palm Mortuary since 1985.

Dr. Close served as the president of the State Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors of Maryland from 2008-2013. He is the owner and managing director of Hari P. Close Funeral Service, P.A. He is the past Director Governor II of the Board of Directors of the National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association and is a past chair of the Funeral Directors Association of Maryland.

Dr. Close holds an Associate of Arts in Mortuary Science from Catonsville Community College, a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Economics from Tuskegee University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies from Eastern Theology Seminary. Dr. Close also holds a Master of Arts in Theology from Eastern Theological Seminary, a Doctor of Divinity in Bible Instruction from the Bible Institute, and a Doctor of Divinity from Eastern Theological Seminary.

During the event, Mr. Carter was elected to service as Secretary and Treasurer. He was also elected to serve a second term as district four director. Mr. Carter was elected to The Conference Board of Directors in 2011. As district four director, he represents funeral service regulators from Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Ontario.

Mr. Carter has been a board member of the Ohio Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors since 2010. He has been a licensed embalmer and funeral director in the state of Ohio since 1986, and has been a Certified Funeral Service Practitioner since 1999. He is a Past President of both the Ohio Funeral Directors Association and the Central Ohio Funeral Directors Association.

Mr. Carter owns and operates the oldest embalming service in the Columbus, Ohio metro area. He is also the co-owner of the only independent crematory in Columbus, Ohio metro area. Mr. Carter is a graduate of Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science. He has a Bachelor of Science in Communication and a Master of Science in Marketing and Communication from Franklin University, and has three years of post-graduate study in Theology.

Model Practice Act Continued

Regulatory Authority and Continuing Education requirements were all discussed and critiqued by attendees.

Review of the recommendations and suggestions have begun by the committee with the invaluable guidance from the jurisdictions. With several conference calls on the horizon, as well as an in-person meeting, the committee will have its hands full in the months ahead preparing the Model Practice Act for adoption at the 2015 Annual Meeting in Dallas, Texas.

The purpose of the Model Practice Act for Funeral Service is to provide a resource for legislatures and funeral service boards, address issues related to the public protection mission of regulating the practice of funeral service, establishment of standards surrounding competence, ethics and discipline, and reflect current issues in professional regulation.
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