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The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards
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Photo Included: 2015-2016 ICFSEB Board of Directors Executive Committee (.jpg)
From left to right: Past President Bart Burton, Vice President A.R. “Sandy” Mahon, President Dr. Hari P. Close, II, CFSP, and Secretary/Treasurer Edward Muhleisen.

The Conference Holds 111th Annual Meeting

DALLAS (February, 2015) -- The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards held its 111th Annual Meeting February 25 – 26, 2015, at Hilton Dallas Lincoln Centre in Dallas, Texas. 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.

Moderated by Douglas “Mack” Smith, the Board Member Training Program was held for the third consecutive year. The two-day program included a series of discussions led by Dale Atkinson, of Atkinson & Atkinson, LLC., that focused on familiarizing 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, the role of the board, delegation of authority, conflicts of interest, board outreach, social media, immunity, and other current regulatory issues. Attendees from eight jurisdictions participated in an exercise that focused on problematic scenarios involving board regulation.

Wednesday morning included two pre-meeting sessions. The annual meeting of the Association of Executives of Funeral Service Boards (AEFSB) met for the 14th 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 Program Manager for The Conference, Sarah Gill. Attendees had the opportunity to learn about new policies and procedures regarding the Conference exam program and its future.

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. During the business meeting, Lisa Moore, the Chair of the Model Practice Act Committee, presented on the completion of The Conference Model Practice Act for Funeral Service. Ms. Moore updated attendees on the development process, makeup of the committee, and discussed focus areas of The Act. Following her presentation the floor was open for questions
and discussion regarding the document. In a vote 24-1, the Conference Model Practice Act for Funeral Service was adopted.

Also on the agenda for the business meeting was a by-law amendment proposal by the Maryland Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors. The amendment centered on Section 3 of the by-laws, Board of Directors Eligibility. After discussion on the floor the proposed amendment failed.

Following the business meeting, attorney Jennifer Semko from Baker and Mackenzie, LLP, gave a presentation on examination security legal issues. Ms. Semko expressed the importance of examination security and the best practices to follow before, during, and after examinations. During her presentation, Ms. Semko discussed various legal principles including ex parte seizures. Conference legal counsel, Dale Atkinson, gave attendees an update on recent cases involving different regulatory professions nationwide and discussed what regulators and attendees could learn from each case.

The second day began with a presentation on statutory authority and examining the scope of the board from Mark Evely, Attorney and Program Director of the Mortuary Science Program at Wayne State University. Mr. Evely shared the experiences Michigan has had with codifying and repealing administrative rules related to mortuary science.

Ruth Ann Arty, Executive Director of the Maryland Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors gave an overview of overcoming obstacles in instituting cremation regulation. Ms. Arty presented on the experience the state of Maryland had between two agencies working together to pass regulation for cremation and the collaboration process involved in its execution.

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 what individual licenses look like and if they included a photo, examination retake policies, alkaline hydrolysis, regulation jurisdiction rule books, pre-need compensation funds, and recent legal cases. During the district meetings, elections were held for districts four, six, and eight.

Mark Ransford a board member from the Michigan Board of Examiners in Mortuary Science was elected to serve as District 4 Director. Douglas “Mack” Smith, Executive Secretary of the Kansas Board of Mortuary Arts, was elected to a second term as District 6 Director. After
completing his predecessor’s term, A.R. “Sandy” Mahon was elected to serve as District 8 Director.

Thursday afternoon kicked off with the annual awards luncheon. Following the district meeting and AEFSB reports, President Bart Burton recognized Past President Gail Thomas-DeWitt for the time she served on the Board of Directors and for her dedication to The Conference. President Burton then presented Dalene Paull with the President’s Distinguished Service Award and recognized her for her ongoing commitment, leadership, and outstanding service to The Conference. Ms. Paull has been with The Conference since 1997 and has served as Executive Director since 2002.

Dr. Hari P. Close II, CFSP, was elected President, A.R. “Sandy” Mahon was elected to serve as Vice President and Edward Muhleisen was elected to serve as Secretary/Treasurer. After Mr. Burton presented Dr. Close with the President’s Gavel, the 2015-2016 Board of Directors were officially sworn in.

The afternoon continued with a panel discussion on alternative certifications. Peter Burke of the North Carolina Board of Funeral Service and District 3 Director of The Conference, Jennifer Kandt of the Nevada Funeral Board, and Vanessa Neikamp of the Ohio Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors were the panel participants and engaged attendees in discussion surrounding the regulation and requirements of the emerging fields within the industry.

For the final session of the day, attendees were divided into six teams for a group exercise. This year, the group exercise focused on enhancing licensure portability. Each team was assigned a specific topic to review and discuss. The topics included: reciprocal agreements, communication, the implementation of the Model Practice Act, national registry for funeral service, model documents, and licensure requirements. At the end of the group exercise, each team reported on potential obstacles and solutions to the issues that each topic presented. At the conclusion of the Annual Meeting, President Burton thanked everyone for making this year’s meeting a success and invited everyone to the 112th Annual Meeting in Newport Beach, California.

The ICFSEB Annual Meeting provides a valuable opportunity for those interested in furthering funeral service regulation to come together for exchange of information, problem-solving strategies, and goals for the future of the funeral service profession. The 2016 Annual Meeting is slated for February 24 – 25, 2016 in Newport Beach, California, at the
Hyatt Regency Newport Beach. For more information on the annual meeting or The Conference, call 479-442-7076, or visit www.theconferenceonline.org.

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