

Minutes of 2010 Annual Meeting
Funeral Consumers Alliance of Oregon
Sunday, 2 p.m., April 26, 2010
St. Paul's United Methodist Church
11631 SE Linwood Avenue, Milwaukie, OR 97222

Present: all current board members, and FCAO members and guests totaling about 45 people. (The number who signed in was 41.)

WELCOME—Mary Sohlstrom, president, welcomed guests and introduced members of the Board and Office Manager Sandy Lofy. Steve Moore of River View Cemetery Funeral Home introduced Jocelyn Bagley and Jared Hopson from his staff. Nancy Ward, home funeral consultant, was also introduced.

MINUTES: There having been no additions or corrections, the minutes of the September 25, 2008, Annual Meeting were approved as printed. Copies were available for members at the Registration table.

REPORTS:

Office manager—Sandy Lofy reported that at the moment we have 19,140 members, if “inactive” members are included (those with unknown addresses). There are 16,561 active members. New memberships recorded include: 2005, 485; 2006, 415; 2007, 409; 2008, 240; 2009, 251; 2010, 76 so far. She reported receiving, since the last mailing, a great many responses from members appreciative of the organization, and now has about 400 e-mail addresses.

President—Mary Sohlstrom explained the need for our increasing our board to 7-11 members to comply with our bylaws. She also reviewed what the organization has accomplished and defined our original purposes, to negotiate rates with facilities, and consumer protection. Our goals should now include setting up Advisory Committees:

1. Price Comparisons (Mt. Hood College might be able to help us)
2. Newsletter, and our Web site
3. Starting the 501(C)(3) organization

Mary explained that the bylaws require at least four meetings a year, but the current board has been meeting about every six weeks to handle the business.

Treasurer—Ed Warmoth gave a detailed explanation of the financial reports that had been distributed, one for 2009 and one for the first quarter of 2010. He explained the sources of income: memberships, record fees from providers, and donations including the special fund-raising mailing for which FCA had loaned us the funds. The latter brought in over \$9,000 from Oregon members, with a net gain of over \$6,000 after expenses. Getting the contract mortuaries to send us the record fees provided by the contracts has been difficult in some cases. (This is a \$50 fee charged when service is provided to an FCAO member. It is to be sent to FCAO, and is often the only way we know when a member has died.)

Ed explained that our contract with DEX was canceled. Charges for January through March of 2010 were refunded. A Reserve Fund is needed to replace the

present computer. Our web host expense runs \$81 per year. Total available funds as of April 23, 2010: \$6,429.53.

In conclusion, Ed also urged those present to think not just “What can FCAO do for me?” but also “What can FCAO do for others in our community?”

Speakers’ Bureau / Legislative Watch—Sylvia Bouneff, with her husband Bob, has filled most of FCAO’s speaking assignments this past year or so, and she has attended the meetings of the Advisory Committee on Rules and Regulations of the Oregon Mortuary and Cemetery Board. At the board’s request, she reviewed from the bylaws the caution about conflict of interest, the main duties of board members, and listed the main areas of activity for board members (and other volunteers): speakers’ bureau, legislative watch, price surveys, newsletter writing and editing, website maintenance, and creation of the new Funeral Consumers Education Foundation as a 501(C)(3).

Background, History, Update—Bob Bouneff, past president and one of the founders of OMA/FCAO, explained that FCAO is now a 501(C)(4) non-profit. (There is a financial benefit to membership; contributions are not tax-deductible.) A no-membership organization strictly to educate the public (the Funeral Consumers Education Foundation) would qualify as a 501(C)(3) and would allow for tax-deductible contributions. All of FCAO’s educational expenses could be covered by FCEF. On May 18, 2009, the Board voted to begin efforts to set up the 501(C)(3) organization, Funeral Consumers Education Foundation of Oregon. The process has begun, but the application is not complete.

Bob reviewed the history of the OMA/FCAO from its beginnings in 1960-61 to the present. This organization started from the efforts of an ecumenical group of religious leaders and social workers who recognized (1) a need for *choice* in funeral arrangements; (2) a need for *education* about the industry; and (3) the need for people to do *advance planning*. The publication of Jessica Mitford’s American Way of Death followed shortly afterwards. People’s Memorial in Seattle had been formed a decade or so earlier. Similar groups sprang up in other places, and before long it was a continental effort throughout the US and Canada—which helped account for the name change from OMA to FCAO. Many of the original goals have been accomplished; the public has benefited, as well as members.

In the early days, there were only 5-10% cremations, whereas now 75-80% of disposition is by cremation. There is a need for consumer protection since the State only has 2.5 persons to investigate this industry and provide safeguards for the public.

BRAINSTORM TIME—Sandy Lofy facilitated the brainstorming by inviting those present to form small groups and to reflect together on the importance of FCAO. When representatives from the small groups reported back, Johnette Orpinela recorded responses, summarized as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Be a watchdog | Assist with pre-planning |
| Make the funeral process easier | Vehicle for information, communication |
| Compile price surveys | Have small interest groups |
| Provide information on choices | Provide Speakers Bureau |
| Reach out to Young People | |

ELECTION OF TRUSTEES—Mary Sohlstrom opened the meeting for nominations of new members of the Board of Trustees. Each nominee present made a brief statement of her or his background and experience, and interest in FCAO. The following nominees were elected by unanimous ballot:

Alan McPherron, Leon Paulson, Sylvia Bouneff (for a second term), Katherine Poree, Paul King, Cliff Wamacks, Jeanne Staehli, Nancy Bieber and Jim Sitzman. (Nancy Bieber and Jim Sitzman were not present, but had previously indicated a willingness to serve.)

Patti Blenkinsop will continue another year to fill her unexpired term.

PROPOSED BYLAWS CHANGE REGARDING METHOD OF NOTIFICATION OF MEETINGS—The board had proposed a change in the bylaws to eliminate the words “by mail or” from the section on annual meetings, since the cost of mailing is so high. After some discussion, it was moved by Carolyn Rundorf and seconded by Alan McPherron to table the motion to make that change. The motion to table passed. The discussion included the following suggestion from Bob Bouneff: send a postcard, one time, to the entire membership asking in effect: “If you need meeting notification by mail, let us know. Otherwise, you will receive notification via e-mail and the web.” This is a method increasingly used by businesses, and would greatly reduce mailing costs.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Mary Sohlstrom requested that the new Board members gather at the close of the meeting to set a time and place for their first organizational meeting to be held within two weeks, in accordance with the bylaws.

Respectfully submitted,
Patti Blenkinsop, Secretary
and Johnette Orpinela