

These minutes have not been approved by the Board

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF FUNERAL DIRECTING AND EMBALMING**
March 26, 2026

1. ROLL CALL

The Board of Funeral Directing and Embalming was called to order by the Chair, Steven Brunken, at 8:58 a.m., at the Nebraska State Office Building, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lower-Level Morrill Room, Lincoln, Nebraska. The meeting was conducted In-Person and by WebEx. The following members answered roll call.

Steven Brunken, Chairperson
Amy Blinston, Vice-Chairperson
James Conner, Secretary
Jamie Dolan – New Member

A quorum was present, and the meeting convened. Also present were: Sean Loving, Program Manager; Heather Ord, Health Licensing Coordinator; Katherine Amyot, Department Legal; Tyler Walvoord, Department Legal; and T.J. O'Neill, Assistant Attorney General.

Brunken announced that there is a copy of all the public documents being reviewed at this meeting available in the meeting room pursuant to the Open Meetings Act.

In accordance with Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-1411 of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, copies of the agenda were e-mailed to the Board members and other interested parties, posted on the DHHS web site at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/licensure/Pages/Agendas-and-Minutes.aspx> and posted in the Licensure Unit on March 11, 2026.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Dolan moved, seconded by Blinston, to approve the agenda as presented. Voting aye: Brunken, Blinston, Conner, and Dolan Voting nay: none. Abstain: none Absent: none Motion carried.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 22, 2026

Conner moved, seconded by Dolan, to approve the agenda as presented. Voting aye: Brunken, Blinston, and Conner Voting nay: none. Abstain: Dolan Absent: none Motion carried.

4. INVESTIGATIONAL REPORTS & OTHER CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION – CLOSED SESSION

Did not go into closed session at this time.

5. OPEN SESSION Application review and recommendations (initial licensure, reinstatement, convictions, administrative penalties, and mail ballot reports)

6. UPDATES AND REPORTS

a) **Legislation:**

No discussion at this time.

b) **Nebraska Funeral Directing Association (NEFDA):** <http://www.nefda.org->

Stefanie Gonzalez stated there was nothing to report at this time.

c) **International Conference of Funeral Service Examination Board (ICFSEB):**
<https://theconferenceonline.org/>

Brunken attended the 122nd International Conference of the Funeral Service Examination Board (ICFSEB) as a delegate from February 24, 2026, to February 26, 2026. Brunken discussed what was discussed at the conference:

***International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards (ICFSEB)
February 24–26, 2026***

The 2026 International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards highlighted several regulatory, ethical, and workforce challenges affecting funeral service oversight across the United States.

*A key regulatory theme was **apprenticeship flexibility**, with many states allowing embalming cases to be completed across multiple firms, provided documentation is verified by a licensed embalmer. This approach is helping apprentices meet required minimums while maintaining accountability.*

***Examination integrity** remains a growing concern. Incidents of cheating on the National Board Examination continue to increase, with new and increasingly sophisticated methods emerging since the COVID period. Despite these challenges, the reported national pass rate for 2025 was 71%.*

*States are responding differently to oversight demands. **Colorado** was highlighted as an example of increased regulatory investment, having hired two inspectors dedicated solely to funeral home regulation, each at an approximate salary of \$100,000.*

*Significant concern was expressed regarding **unethical body and tissue donation practices**, including documented cases of organ recovery prior to death and an increase in black-market sales of body parts. The absence of federal guidelines was emphasized, as regulation currently occurs only at the state level. Once individuals register as organ donors, families face substantial legal barriers to reversing that decision. The National Funeral Directors Association has testified before Congress advocating for federal standards.*

*Finally, the expanding use of **Death Doulas** across many states raised regulatory and professional boundary questions. Discussions focused on whether Death Doulas may be acting in capacities similar to funeral directors when providing funeral-related advice. It was suggested that states consider formally defining the role, educational requirements, and certification standards for Death Doulas.*

Overall, the conference underscored the need for strengthened exam security, clearer regulatory definitions, enhanced oversight resources, and potential federal involvement in body and tissue donation governance.

Brunken mentioned the Virtual Learning session of 2026 led by Conference Legal Counsel and Regulator Expert Dail Atkins. A conversation about Conflicts on April 21, 2026, at 12 p.m. Central Time. A free one hour Zoom session. Register here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/8po9zcQsQZ-qpxdzL7R11w#/registration>

- d) **Reports: Disciplinary and Non-Disciplinary Actions; License Statistics; and Examinations:** No discussion at this time

7. MEETING SCHEDULE

The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 28, 2026.

To see the list of meeting dates, agendas, and minutes, go to:
<https://dhhs.ne.gov/licensure/Pages/Agendas-and-Minutes.aspx>

8. PUBLIC COMMENT

Stefanie Gonzales
Nebraska Funeral Directing Association (NEFDA)

If a funeral home has a last name listed on their business sign, does the person whose name is on the sign have to be a licensed funeral director?

Legal and the Attorney General's office confirmed that the business sign and the licensed funeral director do not have to match.

Paul Seger
Seger Funeral Home
Atkinson, Nebraska

Seger commented that the state needs an inspector for funeral homes and crematories.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting date will be May 28, 2026. There being no further business, the chair declared the meeting adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

Board of Funeral Directing and Embalming

Summarized by: Heather Ord, Health Licensing Coordinator, Licensure Unit