

These minutes have not been approved by the Board

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF FUNERAL DIRECTING AND EMBALMING**
May 28, 2026

1. ROLL CALL

The Board of Funeral Directing and Embalming was called to order by the Chair, Steven Brunken, at 9:00 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 – via WebEx

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

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 May 14, 2026.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Conner moved, seconded by Blinston, to approve the agenda with the following corrections:

Item 2: "Approval of minutes – January 22, 2026" changed to "Approval of Minutes – March 26, 2026".

Item 7: "Board of Funeral Directing and Embalming 2026 Meeting Schedule – Next scheduled meeting is May 28, 2026", changed to "Board of Funeral Directing and Embalming 2026 Meeting Schedule – Next scheduled meeting is August 20, 2026".

Voting aye: Brunken, Blinston, Conner, and Dolan Voting nay: none. Abstain: none Absent: none
Motion carried.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 26, 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

Conner moved, seconded by Dolan, to enter into closed session at 9:06 a.m. for the purpose of review and discussion of investigative reports, licensure applications, and other confidential information, and for the prevention of needless injury to the reputation of the individuals. Voting aye: Brunken, Blinston, Conner, and Dolan Voting nay: none. Abstain: none Absent: none Motion carried.

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

The board returned to Open Session at 9:22 a.m.

6. UPDATES AND REPORTS

a) **Legislation:**

No discussion at this time.

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

Dolan and Conner attended the 140th NEFDA convention on April 21-23, 2026, in Kearney, Nebraska.

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

Brunken mentioned:

The virtual Learning session #2 – June 16, 2026

The virtual Learning session #3 – August 18, 2026

ICFSEB Board Meeting – August 25, 2026, in Vail, CO

The virtual Learning Session #4 – October 20, 2026

d) **Reports: Disciplinary and Non-Disciplinary Actions; License Statistics; and Examinations:**

No discussion at this time

7. Crematory Operator Credential Review Proposal – Paul Seger

Overview

- Applicant Group: Submitted by the Nebraska Funeral Directors Association (NeFDA) on behalf of its 288 active member funeral directors, assistant funeral directors, and mortuary students.
- Application Date: May 27, 2026.
- Submitted To: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Licensure Unit.

The Problem / Regulatory Gap

- Under current Nebraska Revised Statutes Chapter 71, the state regulates funeral establishments and licensed funeral directors but does not establish a distinct credential, registration, or certification for individual crematory operators.
- There are currently no statutory or regulatory provisions defining the role, requiring minimum education/competency standards, or providing direct individual oversight and discipline for those performing cremations.
- Non-funeral establishments can legally operate crematories in Nebraska without a licensed

funeral director on staff, leaving a gap with no checks and balances, inspections, or DHHS oversight for these facilities.

The Proposal

- Establishment of Certification: Create a mandatory Crematory Operator Certification administered by the Nebraska DHHS.
- Initial Qualifications: Applicants must possess a high school diploma (or equivalent), complete an approved training program (e.g., CANA, ICCFA, or NFDA programs), and pass a competency-based examination.
- Continuing Competency: Certified operators must complete a refresher or continuing education course every five years, aligned with the renewal cycle of the cremation equipment/licensure.
- Standardized Protocols: Establish uniform procedures for decedent identification, chain of custody, equipment operation, and crematory inspections.

Public Benefit & Risk Assessment

- Public Benefit: Protects public health and safety, ensures proper handling of human remains/hazardous materials, ensures equipment safety, and preserves public trust during a highly sensitive process.
- Precedent and Prevention: Proactively addresses rising cremation rates in Nebraska and aims to avoid severe operational and ethical failures seen in deregulated or under-regulated states (e.g., Colorado, Georgia, Illinois).
- Financial Impact: Minor to no additional cost to the state. Providers would incur training fees every five years, with an estimated maximum impact on consumers of approximately \$5 per case (or zero for larger operators).

Seeger commented that the state needs an inspector for funeral homes and crematories. He proposed adding crematories to the board of funeral directing and embalming and asked the board to provide a letter of support in the 407 process (Crematory Operator Credential Review).

8. MEETING SCHEDULE

The next regular meeting is scheduled for August 20, 2026.

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

9. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment at this time.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting date will be August 20, 2026. There being no further business, the chair declared the meeting adjourned at 9:56 a.m.

Board of Funeral Directing and Embalming

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