



Maryland
Department of
the Environment

Community Status Update Meeting

Vaughn Greene Funeral Services

Suna Yi Sariscak, Manager
Air Quality Permits Program
Air and Radiation Administration



Background

- On June 8, 2020, the Air Quality Permits Program received an air quality permit to construct application from Vaughn Greene Funeral Services for the proposed installation of a human crematory at their existing funeral home located at 4905 York Road in Baltimore City.
- Per the Code of Maryland Regulations, an air quality permit to construct application for the installation of a crematory is subject to public review.



Informational Meetings

- An informational meeting is the first step of the expanded public participation process. It is an opportunity for the applicant to present their proposed project to the public.
- A virtual informational meeting was held on December 2, 2020
- An additional in-person informational meeting was held on December 9, 2020



Increased Public Interest

- Following the informational meetings, the Department received a large volume of letters and e-mails expressing concern about the proposed project from surrounding neighborhood associations including, but not limited to, Woodbourne-McCabe, Guilford, Rosebank, Bellona, Brackenridge, Lake Evesham, and Radnor-Winston (including Winston-Govans).
- A virtual community meeting with association leaders and local elected officials was held on June 3, 2021.
- Concerns regarding smoke, odors, proper operation, emissions of toxic air pollutants, and proximity to residences were raised.



Zoning Issues

- Community associations challenged the zoning approval received by Vaughn Greene Funeral Services for the installation of a human crematory.
- On June 14, 2021, the Department sent a letter to the local zoning authority, the Baltimore City Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals (BMZA), for clarification on the zoning approval.
- On July 9, 2021, Vaughn Greene Funeral Services filed a positive appeal with the BMZA in order to confirm zoning approval.



BMZA Zoning Decision

- On August 10, 2021, August 24, 2021, and September 16, 2021, the BMZA held public hearings on the zoning decision.
- On October 19, 2021, the BMZA voted to grant the conditional use requested by Vaughn Greene Funeral Services for the human crematory.
- As part of the approval, the BMZA stated that additional use conditions could be added and gave Vaughn Greene Funeral Services and the communities an opportunity to determine if the parties could agree on use conditions to be formalized in an executed memorandum of understanding (MOU) no later than November 16, 2021 or November 30, 2021 if an extension was granted.



BMZA Zoning Decision - continued

- On January 4, 2022, the BMZA granted approval for Vaughn Greene Funeral Services to install a crematory with the following added conditions:
 - Only human remains from funeral homes owned, operated, or controlled by Vaughn Greene Funeral Services may be cremated on the premises;
 - Vaughn Greene Funeral Services will remove any and all teeth containing mercury amalgams prior to cremation; and
 - Vaughn Greene Funeral Services will comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.



Appeal of the BMZA Decision

- On February 2, 2022, the York Road Partnership (Govans community) filed an appeal of BMZA decision to the Baltimore City Circuit Court
- On July 12, 2022, an appeals hearing was held in the Baltimore City Circuit Court
- On May 16, 2023, the Baltimore City Circuit Court upheld the BMZA zoning decision



Appeal of the Circuit Court Decision

- On June 15, 2023, community groups filed an appeal of the decision with the Appellate Court of Maryland and requested a Motion to Stay Judgment of the zoning approval decision
- On July 26, 2023, the Baltimore City Circuit Court denied the Motion to Stay Judgment
- The court stated in the denial that there was no reason to halt or delay consideration of air quality permitting issues by the Department since there was no immediate harm or consequence to the petitioners as actual construction and operation of the human crematory cannot take place until the Department issues its permit.



Next Steps

- A thorough technical review of the permit application to determine the air quality impacts from the proposed human crematory is underway.
- If the conclusion of the review is that the proposed human crematory can meet all applicable air quality standards, a public hearing will be held to present the Department's findings
- A draft permit with enforceable construction and operating conditions and all supporting technical information used in the review will be made available to the public for review and comment.



Technical Review Considerations

- The Department has established protocols for estimating air pollutant emissions from crematories.
- Additional information is being developed for use in this technical review to aid in evaluating air quality impacts from Vaughn Greene's proposed operation.
- Upon request of several member states including Maryland, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Air Management Association (MARAMA), an association of state and local air agencies, formed a crematory workgroup to assist member agencies.



MARAMA Crematory Workgroup

- MARAMA member agencies include Maryland, Delaware, the District of Columbia, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Philadelphia and Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.
- The workgroup will provide on-going guidance and assistance to develop consistent policies and best practices for determining air pollution emissions and the impact of emissions from crematories in the Mid-Atlantic region.



Other Considerations

- Issues and concerns raised at the previous informational and community meetings, and received in letters sent to the Department, during the zoning hearings, and expressed here tonight will be considered during the review.
- Additional comments and concerns can be sent at any time during this process.
- All elected officials and interested parties will be notified if ARA determines that a permit to construct can be issued and a public hearing is scheduled.



Dedicated Online Webpage

- All information related to this air quality permit to construct application is posted on a dedicated online webpage here:
<https://mde.maryland.gov/vaughn-greene>
- This webpage will be updated as ARA moves through this review process.



Questions and Comments

Please send questions and comments to

Ms. Shannon Heafey

shannon.heafey@maryland.gov

410-537-4433