

MAMC WINTER 2025-2026 NEWSLETTER

CELEBRATING 66 YEARS!



OUR PURPOSE

To promote the improvement of Municipal Cemeteries, their management, operation, and perpetuation; to collect and disseminate practical and scientific information and data of an educational nature relevant to the operation, maintenance and improvement of Municipal Cemeteries; and to develop and maintain the best possible relations between the cemeteries, the public and the allied industries.

2026 MAMC
CONFERENCE

AUGUST 19-21, 2026

THE BAVARIAN INN,
FRANKENMUTH, MI

REGISTRATION
DEADLINE IS

AUGUST 7, 2026

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

GROUP NUMBER: 13W7PW



MAMC Membership Benefits

- Yearly Conference packed with sponsor vendors, other cemeterians, and loads of information
- Quarterly Newsletter with updates and tips
- MAMC website with information on ordinances, sample forms, and previous conference presentations
- MAMC Facebook page

**[CLICK HERE TO BECOME
A MEMBER!](#)**



BOARD MEMBER VOLUNTEERS

If you are interested in being part of the MAMC Board of Directors, please submit your name by Conference time OR at Conference check-in!

EMAIL:
kcaithamer@ci.ludington.mi.us

CEMETERIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

**SUBMIT YOUR
NOMINATIONS BY
JUNE 7!**

MEMBERSHIP DUES

\$45.00

MAMC 2025-2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Welcome to the newly elected board members!

Frank Engle, City of Hillsdale

Tami Penny, Charter Township of Comstock

President: Suzanne Rowland
City of Kalamazoo



Vice-President: Wendy Meldrum,
East China Charter Township

Secretary/Treasurer: Kirk Caithamer
City of Ludington

Dan Carter, City of Marquette
Andy Case, Watertown Charter Township
Cindy Davis, LOR Consulting
Frank Engle, City of Hillsdale
Tami Penny, Charter Township of Comstock
Blayn Szyska, East China Charter Township



VISIT OUR CONFERENCE PAGE TO SEE SOME 2025
CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS!

<https://michiganamc.org/conference/>



HIGHLIGHTS FROM CONFERENCE 2025

CINDY DODGE

LADY O RISING CONSULTING

Cindy spoke about the cemetery being a 24/7/365 project from planning to marketing, finding grants and new burials options. She also explained how cemeteries fit within the parks system and reiterated cemetery law as only Cindy can!

CEMETERIAN OF THE YEAR

MITCHELL FOSTER
CEMETERY SEXTON
VILLAGE OF ROMEO

Congrats!

MAMC ROUND TABLE

Many good questions and discussion points were brought up at the Round Table session on Friday, wrapping up three days of learning, collaborating, and meeting other cemeterians and our vendor sponsors.

A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Warm, post-holiday season's greetings to you all!

As we struggle to keep warm while keeping our cemeteries and communities safely running, I thought it prudent to stop for a moment and consider another form of safety, that being the safety we have, legally and otherwise, in exercising proper management practices in our offices and in our cemeteries. Case in point: a local Catholic cemetery here in Kalamazoo. An article hit the local news this past November about a former sexton, allegedly let go for other reasons in 2023, who is now accused of having kept burial/cemetery payments for himself. The title of the article was: **Where Are the Bodies? Cemetery Worker Allegedly Pocketed Burial Money for Years.**

While the collection of money and placement of burials seems to be two very different things in the scope of the work we do (paper/financial vs. dirt, measurements and excavation), both burial records and financial records demand precise recordkeeping. The article states that ten burials in one area were not recorded. Financial records contained discrepancies such as checks written out to the sexton directly. One man's alleged actions have tarnished this cemetery's reputation and, perhaps, that of funeral homes as families panic, wondering if their loved one was impacted or if the graves they pre-purchased are of record at all.

The similarities in the nearby City cemetery and the Catholic cemetery are obvious. An older, detached Catholic section is adjacent to the City of Kalamazoo's cemetery. Both are hilly in parts, of similar age, and share a similar natural look. In fact, a later news report confused their location with the city cemetery's location, which was later corrected. However, the City of Kalamazoo has different management, records, and recordkeeping procedures. It's easy to point the finger and attempt to place blame. The questions we should all keep in mind are: should I get too comfortable looking at a mess I inherited from cemeterians before me? How many times have old records been incomplete? How many times have I found my own mistake after the fact?

Word of the report came to me by way of two ladies who came in to ask about getting a marker for a loved one. They asked several probing questions! I answered to the best of my ability, knowing it is a sacred trust we have with our community at its most basic level: *We will place your loved one in the place we all agree upon and then let them rest in peace.* Since we are human and imperfect, we must be careful in our work and be open with our errors when discovered, then make good on them as best we can. Some mistakes can be corrected easily; others require informing the family. I'm sure we all have experienced this a time or two, as I have; there is no delight in this at all, but we must maintain the integrity of the final disposition of the deceased and honor that sacred trust we have been given. (It also helps to have a supervisor that holds the same standard when I'd rather stick my head in the sand!) I believe we all continue to learn, and learn from one another, to correct the errors, improve processes, add a system of checks and balances, and carry on the good work.

As some of us take time off, spend extra hours planning for warmer seasons, and/or work extra to keep our communities running in the ice and snow, please take a moment to consider what might be learned from someone else's mistake/oversight or possibly poor intent. Prudent record keeping is a must. How the records translate to who is in the ground is crucial. Lot markers need to be located. Measurements made. Communication is key between office staff and grounds people when records or burial locations change, or modifications are made for precise recordkeeping. Charges and receipts must be given proper protocol so when asked, records will show that people can have confidence in their municipal cemetery. If a concern is raised, it can be answered with clarity and confidence, and the good name of the cemetery and the cemetery staff may be preserved at very little expense.

Enjoy, stay warm, and relax when you can this winter! But don't relax those good procedures! Have questions on what those procedures are or why they are important? Bring those questions to the Michigan Association of Municipal Cemeteries conference this August. Need input sooner than later? Give a call to a seasoned member, Board Member or myself. We cannot weigh in with legal advice but we can share our experiences, protocols and practices, and why we do what we do.

This is at the heart of why MAMC exists.

Our strength is in our membership.

-Suzanne Rowland
Michigan Association of Municipal Cemeteries - President 2025/2026

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www.kalamazoocity.org

PLEASE VISIT THE MAMC WEBSITE FOR SAMPLE FORMS AND ORDINANCES

<http://michiganamc.org/resources>

**THANK YOU TO OUR VENDORS WHO HELP SPONSOR
THE MAMC CONFERENCE EACH YEAR**



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