



BOARD OF CERTIFICATION OF OPERATORS OF WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITIES

Meeting Minutes: Wednesday, January 3, 2018

Members in Attendance: Janet Baldwin, Paul Desrosiers, Julia Forgue, Fred Kurdziel, Frank McLynch, Bill Patenaude, and Jon Schock

Others in Attendance: Chuck Labbe and Pedro Rojas, Warwick Sewer Authority
Christina Hoefsmid, Esq. and Traci Pena, RIDEM

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m.

The Board reviewed the draft November 1, 2017 open meeting minutes.

Mr. Schock motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Kurdziel seconded the motion. The motion passed with all eligible members voting in favor. Ms. Forgue and Mr. Desrosiers abstained as they were not present at the November meeting.

The next item discussed was a request from Mr. Pedro Rojas from the Warwick Sewer Authority to take the Grade 1 exam orally, as English is not Mr. Rojas' first language. Mr. Rojas is a Mechanic II at the WSA. The Board does not require mechanics to be certified, however the WSA does. Mr. Rojas unsuccessfully took the Grade 1 course exam in the Fall of 2017 as well as the Board's exam four times (November 2016, April 2017, August 2017, and November 2017). In his capacity as a municipal assistance provider, Mr. Patenaude sat with Mr. Rojas for a study review prior to the last exam and stated that it appeared to him that Mr. Rojas verbally understood the material. At the WSA a study workshop was held to which Mr. Labbe stated that Mr. Rojas was also an active participant. Also Mr. Desrosiers taught a portion of the Basic Course and found Mr. Rojas to be engaged in the material and "had the tools of the profession." Dr. Baldwin asked if given an oral exam would it be reading question verbatim or more of a conversation. Mr. Patenaude noted that oral exams have been granted by the Board in the past, and during those oral exams the questioning was often conversation-based but still structured around the exam's 100 questions.

After discussion, Mr. Patenaude motioned to offer Mr. Rojas an oral exam. Mr. Patenaude would seek another Board member to assist in administering at a mutually convenient time. Ms. Forgue seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor, as such the motion passed.

Mr. Rojas thanked the Board and left with meeting with Mr. Labbé.

Next was a request from Nicole LaBoy to take a make-up Grade 2 exam. (Ms. LaBoy had passed this Fall the Basic WWTF Course, and thus possesses a Grade 1 OIT. Ms. Laboy was not able to attend the November 2017 Grade 2 exam due to a pre-planned vacation. Mr. Patenaude noted that Ms. Laboy had explained to him that she was unclear of the date of the Grade 2 exam. Mr. Patenaude stated that the exam-notice flier, which has been used for many years, includes the following language: “IMPORTANT: SESSIONS WILL BE ASSIGNED AT TIME OF APPLICATION APPROVAL. PLEASE CAREFULLY READ YOUR APPROVAL LETTER FOR SESSION ASSIGNMENT.” (All caps original to notice.)

Mr. Desrosiers stated this method has been successful since its implementation. Ms. Forgue and Dr. Baldwin did not think the flier was clear and asked if more specific exam date information should be provided. Mr. Patenaude noted that the Board does not know how many applicants will apply for each exam until the close of the application period (a reality that is complicated by the fact that many exam applications arrive in the last days of the application period), thus the decision is made once all applications have been received if the second date is needed for an overflow, and if so, for which grade exams. Typically, if the second date is needed the break up will be to give Grades 1, 3 and 4 on the first day and Grade 2 on the second. Mr. Patenaude reiterated that this depends on the number of applicants for each Grade. Mr. Schock stated if the Grade 2 is not a requirement for Ms. LaBoy, then she should reapply for the next exam.

Mr. Schock motioned to deny Ms. LaBoy’s request for a make-up exam and suggest she reapply for the next exam. Mr. Desrosiers seconded the motion. Ms. Forgue voted Nay. Mr. Patenaude abstained from voting on the motion. All other eligible members voted in favor, and as such the motion passed.

Mr. Patenaude noted he would evaluate the exam flyer to determine if there is any ambiguity.

Exam results were then reviewed. Dr. Baldwin stated she was concerned with the low averages. Ms. Forge offered to Dr. Baldwin that she may be looking at the examinees as college students. However, it is likely that the examinees may not have been in a classroom or taken an exam in some time. The November 2017 exam was the most attended in years.

The Rules and Regulations have been promulgated and are in affect as of December 4th, 2017.

Ms. Pena then provided an update on license renewals. To date, there have been over 460 renewals received and there were about 80 operators who have not submitted notification.

The next item to be discussed was an advisory request from Zambarano Hospital’s wastewater superintendent, the employer of Mr. Nichols Cook. Mr. Cook was employed at the Zambarano Hospital in 2014, passed the Grade 1 exam and received a Grade 1 OIT to expire on October 20, 2014. Mr. Cook left employment before gaining a full year employment status. His OIT then was held in a “frozen” status. As has happened in the past, Grade 1 OITs are not required to renew. Mr. Desrosiers stated that a precedent needed to be made for individual who left the profession with an OIT status. Mr. Schock noted that according to the Rules and Regulations 5.7(A), OITs are valid for three years. Mr. Schock suggested that

Rhode Island Board of Certification of Operators of Wastewater Treatment Facilities
January 3, 2018 Meeting Minutes

based on those regulations, Mr. Cook sit for the next examination. In future OIT issuance Part 5.7(A) of the Regulations should be stated.

In new business, Mr. Desrosiers stated that Mr. Peter Eldridge is the new president of NWPCA.

On June 3-6, the NEWEA Spring meeting will be held in the City of Newport with the newly appointed president Ms. Janine Burke-Wells of the Warwick Sewer Authority. Mr. Patenaude encouraged Board members to attend.

The next Boot Camp will address Process Control

At 10:20, Mr. Patenaude motioned to adjourn. Mr. Schock seconded. All members present voted in favor, as such the motion passed.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 7, 2018 at 9:30 at the RIDEM – Office of Water Resources, Room 280 located at 235 Promenade St., Providence, RI 02908.