



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

BOARD OF CERTIFICATION OF OPERATORS OF WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITIES

Meeting Minutes: August 1, 2007

Members in Attendance: Richard Dionne, Julia Forgue, Fred Kurdziel, Bill Patenaude, Jon Schock, Tom White and Ray Wright

Others in Attendance: Donald Sauvageau and Janine Burke - West Warwick WWTF
Dennis Kamfonik, Clarence Farrow and Steven Gauvin - Synagro
Heidi Schock
Jennifer Lemieux, Greg Schultz and Traci Pena - RIDEM

Mr. Patenaude opened the meeting with the review of the draft June 2007 meeting minutes.

Mr. Patenaude motioned to approve the minutes as drafted. Dr. Wright seconded the motion. Ms. Forgue, Dr. Wright and Messrs. White, Kurdziel, Dionne and Patenaude voted to approve the motion. Mr. Schock abstained, as he was absent from the previous meeting. As such, the motion passed.

The next order of business was the matter of unlicensed operators at the Woonsocket-based Synagro sludge-incineration facility. According to the Board's Regulations, all operators have only 1 (one) year in which to obtain their licenses. Two Synagro employees, Clarence Farrow and Steven Gauvin, have been operators for more than 2 years but have not officially obtained their operator licenses. They did, however, take and passed the Operator I course. Plant Manager Dennis Kamfonik briefed the board on the individuals' abilities and stated that they have been performing their duties in a satisfactory manner. Mr. Patenaude suggested to the Board that both Mr. Farrow and Mr. Gauvin had met all the requirements for licensure except that they had failed to submit the appropriate application within one year of employment; Mr. Patenaude also commented that it is stressed at the Basic Wastewater Operations course that an application is needed for licensure. After brief discussion all board members agreed that the technical failure to apply for licensure within the one year from the start of employment (and within the two years stated in the regulations of the passing of the Basic Wastewater Operator course) does not in itself signify that individuals are not competent to hold licensure.

Mr. Patenaude made a motion to allow Messrs Farrow and Gauvin to submit an application for certification. Mr. White seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor and the motion passed.

In introducing the next order of business, per §42-46-5(a)(4) Mr. Patenaude motioned to convene into executive session in order to discuss an issue involving potential criminal or civil misconduct at a Rhode Island wastewater treatment facility. Mr. White seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call voting in the affirmative: Mr. Patenaude, Mr. Dionne, Mr. Kurdziel, Mr. White, Dr. Wright Ms. Forgue and Mr. Schock.

Whilst in executive session, Mr. Schock motioned to issue an individual at a Rhode Island wastewater treatment facility a Notice of Intent (NOI) to show cause whereupon the individual can provide additional information that may be useful to the Board in its deliberations on the matter. Mr. Patenaude seconded the motion; all members present voted in favor.

Mr. Patenaude made a motion in executive session to send a warning letter to an operator at the Newport wastewater treatment facility resulting from errors in judgment. Mr. White seconded the motion; Ms. Forgue recused herself from the vote. All other members voted in the affirmative.

Mr. Schock motioned to seal the August 1, 2007 Executive Session meeting minutes. Mr. Patenaude seconded the motion; all members present voted in favor to seal the minutes.

Mr. Schock made a motion to resume the meeting into open session. Mr. Kurdziel seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor to seal the minutes with the following roll call: Mr. Patenaude, Mr. Dionne, Mr. Kurdziel, Mr. White, Dr. Wright, Ms. Forgue and Mr. Schock voting in the affirmative.

The next item discussed was Citizenship for Licensure. At a previous board meeting, Mr. Patenaude noted that he had received a request from the Department of Labor and Training, in which they sought an update for their state license database. According to DLT records, to attain a wastewater operator license the Board does not require United States citizenship. The board noted concern about offering operator licensure at wastewater treatment facilities without US citizenship, and as such voted to require citizenship however allowable by law. Attorney Schultz informed the Board that the Regulations go through specific requirements, but do not mention citizenship. Mr. Patenaude suggested Mr. Schultz investigate the matter further before the board takes any formal action.

The next item discussed was the Basic WWTF Course grading. Mr. Paul Desrosiers, assistant superintendent of the NBC-Fields Point WWTF, had written to the Board of his concerns after reviewing the mid-term and final exams of Mr. Michael Giammarco from the Spring 2007 Grade I Operator Prep course. Mr. Giammarco had passed the final course exam with a score of 70%, but was not awarded a certificate of completion because he failed the midterm exam; with the final course grade calculated as 30% of the midterm and 70% of the final exam, Mr. Giammarco's final grade was below 70%. Mr. Desrosiers, a former instructor of the course, wrote that the course was originally offered to provide training to plant operators in lieu of them having to learn the test materials on their own. As a "bonus," the mid-term exam was used to bring up class grades. After he reviewed the mid-term exam, he concluded that some of the questions might have referred to course material that wasn't yet covered in class. He also thought the midterm grades were typically high, in the 89-90% range. The failure rate of 7 out of the 13 course participants failed the mid-term sent up a "red flag" that there might be some measure of inconsistency surrounding the mid-term exam. Perhaps some of the content of the exam questions should be reviewed for appropriateness. Mr. Desrosiers also thought that Mr. Giammarco should be issued a certificate for successful completion of the course based on the passing of the final exam, which is the Grade 1 exam used by the board. Mr. Patenaude handed out a graph summarizing the failure rate of each question on the midterm. Based on the summary, Mr. Schock thought the material on the mid term might not have been covered properly, if at all. Thus, he thought the mid term should not be counted for the final grades for this semester only. Mr. Patenaude commented that the mid term was a good tool in accomplishing two goals: (1) It gives those individuals who have not taken any schooling or testing in a number of years practice, and (2) It helps students understand the material to date and the types of questions to be expected on the final. Dr. Wright thought perhaps the instructor could be spoken to and to see if a syllabus is being followed. He should also be concerned if he is adequately following that syllabus. Mr. Patenaude would obtain a copy of the syllabus for Board review. The matter of the course and the operator passing the exam will be tabled pending further discussion.

The next item discussed was Mandatory Retraining for Renewal. Mr. Patenaude noted that a meeting has yet to be set up with the League of Cities and Towns, as he had wished. Mr. Patenaude will contact the League to schedule such a meeting.

The next item on the agenda was WWTF Manager Training "Boot Camp," which is a joint effort between the RI DEM and the NEIWPC. The program will be for nominated individuals who will then be involved in a series of intensive trainings on all pertinent areas of wastewater management. The training begins in September.

Mr. Patenaude also wanted to extend his gratitude to Traci Pena, whose birthday was the day of the meeting. Mr. Patenaude noted that Ms. Pena is the Board administrative coordinator, and she works diligently in her duties for the Board.

With no new business, Mr. Patenaude moved to adjournment. Mr. Dionne seconded the motion. With all members voted in favor, the motion passed.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 5, 2007 at 9:30 a.m. in room 280 of the DEM – Office of Water Resources, 235 Promenade St., Providence, RI 02908.