



## **BOARD OF CERTIFICATION OF OPERATORS OF WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITIES**

Meeting Minutes: Wednesday, December 5, 2018

**Members in Attendance:** Paul Desrosiers, Julia Forgue, Fred Kurdziel, Frank McLynch and Bill Patenaude

**Others in Attendance:** Bernard Harwood, Alfredo Diez, and John Contrino: NBC – Bucklin Point  
Bernie Bishop, Chief Operating Officer; Harrison Songolo, Superintendent;  
and Mike Bedard, Chief of Operations: West Warwick WWTF  
Greg Schultz, Esq., RI Attorney General's Office  
Traci Pena, RIDEM

The meeting was called to order at 9:40 a.m.

The Board first discussed a matter related to Mr. Bernard Harwood from the NBC – Bucklin Point facility. Mr. Harwood started employment as an operator on December 10, 2017 and as such is required to attain licensure by December 10, 2018. Mr. Harwood has made several attempts to obtain his Grade 1 license, most recently with a score of 69 at the November 2018 exams. Mr. Harwood was asking for leniency on the one-year licensure date until he had the opportunity to review his exam for consideration of the one point needed for a passing score of 70. Mr. Harwood noted that while he had studied and sat with Mr. Patenaude for one-on-one assistance, he is uncomfortable taking exams. NBC-BP superintendent Marc Pariseault had emailed Mr. Patenaude in support of Mr. Harwood's request. Mr. Pariseault stated that Mr. Harwood was a good employee and working satisfactorily as an operator. Mr. Schultz advised the Board that they have the discretion to continue the matter. Ms. Forgue recommended granting the request. As the matter was not on the agenda, a vote could not be taken. Mr. Patenaude noted that in lieu of a formal vote, he would use his administrative authority to continue the matter to the January meeting and allow Mr. Harwood the opportunity to review his exam, as is afforded to all examinees.

Mr. Harwood thanked the Board and left the meeting.

The matter of Jeff Chapdelaine was tabled as additional information was not available.

The next item discussed was the matter of the West Warwick Assistant Superintendent. The town recently interviewed for the Assistant Wastewater Superintendent position. According to Mr. Bishop, the facility's Chief Operating Officer, the Town is requesting that Mr. Mike Bedard, Chief of Operations, be allowed to hold the Assistant Superintendent position on an interim basis until he is able to take the Grade 4 exam. Mr. Bedard has been employed at the facility for 14 years and Mr. Bishop stated that he is a worthy candidate for the position. The Superintendent, Harrison Songolo, currently holds a Grade 4 license. In the event Mr. Songolo is unavailable for extended periods, Mr. Bishop, also a Grade 4 and former superintendent, would be able to make superintendent-level decisions. Mr. Bedard would otherwise be in responsible charge in accord with the Assistant Superintendent's functions as a training

opportunity. Mr. Songolo affirmed the Town's request for the promotion of Mr. Bedard on an interim basis until he is able to pass the Grade 4 exam.

**After discussion, Mr. Patenaude motioned to approve the Town's request with a letter to the Town with the understanding that Mr. Bedard is assuming the day-to-day duties of the Assistant Superintendent but that if Mr. Songolo is not be present for extended times, Mr. Bishop will be available. Mr. McLynch seconded the motion. The motion passed with all members voting in favor.**

Messers. Bishop, Songolo and Bedard left the meeting at 10:30.

The next item discussed was the matter of certification allowance for specific positions in Narragansett Bay Commission's EMDA section. The matter came before the Board when EMDA employees Eliza Moore and Karen Cortes applied to sit for the Grade 2 exam, having passed the Grade 1 course. Based on information received from the applicants' supervisor, Mr. John Motta, the Board concluded that the positions were administrative in nature and not "field-facing," as were other NBC EMDA positions that have been granted licensure.

**Mr. McLynch made a motion denying the request of Ms. Moore and Ms. Cortes to sit for the Grade 2 examination and any operator licenses. Mr. Kurdziel seconded the motion. With all members eligible voting in favor, the motion passed. Mr. Desrosiers abstained from the vote.**

The next item discussed was the draft language for the Rules and Regulations of Operators of Wastewater Treatment Facilities. Based on input from front-line members of the profession, one of the goals of the revisions is to allow certain maintenance employees the opportunity to take a Grade 3 exam. Mr. Alfredo Diez, employed in the maintenance staff at NBC-BP, offered that the state would benefit from having more licensed operators in the wastewater profession, in part because allowing maintenance staff to take the Grade 3 exam would better prepare individuals for any needed operations positions. Mr. Contrino, also of NBC-BP maintenance, read a prepared statement noting that there are two traits of a conscience worker: incentive and opportunity. He added that if incentive and opportunity are not available, staff motivation is lost, and workers becomes stagnant.

Mr. Patenaude explained the proposed language regarding this matter in the current draft of the Board's regulations, which could allow Grade 3 examination, but not necessarily licensure, to appropriately qualified maintenance workers. After review of the most recent draft regulations, Mr. Contrino noted that the Board was making a "good start." Mr. Patenaude thanked Messrs. Diez and Contrino for their presence at the meeting and their input, noting that it likely represented many in the wastewater sector's maintenance profession.

In new business, the 2019 board meeting schedule was reviewed. Based on holiday schedules, the January 2 meeting will be moved to January 9<sup>th</sup> and the July 4<sup>th</sup> meeting was removed. If a July meeting is needed it will be scheduled.

The exam results were reviewed. Mr. Patenaude noted that he would like to establish a group to assist in revising the Grade 3 and 4 exams, as those exams have not been reviewed in some time. The exam reviewing process was also discussed. Mr. Desrosiers expressed concerns of allowing Grade 3 and 4 examinees to review the exam, as has historically been allowed. Ms. Forgue suggested that such reviews were helpful to aid examinees in determining their deficiencies. Mr. Kurdziel agreed with Mr. Desrosiers, noting the stricter exam review process in the drinking water sector. Mr. Patenaude suggested adding exam-review language to the Regulations. He also suggested discussions of developing a no-disclosure agreement to sign for all those when reviewing exams. Board members were unsure if such a measure was necessary; Ms. Forgue expressed concern about enforceability.

The 2019 Exam Schedule was then reviewed.

**With no other business, Mr. Patenaude motioned to adjourn. Mr. Desrosiers seconded. The motion passed with all members voting in favor.**

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 9:30 a.m. at the RIDEM – Office of Water Resources, Room 280 located at 235 Promenade St., Providence, RI 02908.