



BOARD OF CERTIFICATION OF OPERATORS OF WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITIES

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

Others in Attendance: Christina Hoefsmit, Esq., Traci Pena and Anthony Sylvia - RIDEM
Jeff Chapdelaine, Narragansett and Jim Lauzon, Woonsocket
WWTFs

Meeting Minutes - April 21, 2020

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the Board held the first teleconference meeting.

Mr. Patenaude called the meeting to order at 9:30 p.m.

Mr. Patenaude performed an audio rollcall of Board members and those members of the public/wastewater industry that were also participating. (See above.)

The Board reviewed the draft February 5, 2020 meeting minutes.

After review, Mr. Desrosiers motioned to approve the minutes. Ms. Forgue seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call: Ms. Forgue, Mr. McLynch, Mr. Patenaude, Mr. Schock, and Mr. Desrosiers all voting in favor.

The Board reviewed the draft February 18, 2020 - Regulation meeting minutes.

After review, Mr. Desrosiers motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Patenaude seconded the motion. Both Mr. Desrosiers and Patenaude voted in favor. All others recused themselves as they did not attend the February 18th meeting. Therefore, the motion passed.

Mr. Patenaude inquired if Board members had any specific issues that they felt needed addressing or any comment on the Board's March 16th, 2020 COVID-19 guidance, or any updates from their organizations.

Mr. McLynch reported that at Cranston there are no positive cases of COVID-19 and that shifts are split to optimize minimal contact.

Mr. Desrosiers reported that the NBC plants had modified schedules to reduce overlaps of scheduled maintenance and that employees report to duty as needed. There were no known COVID-19 cases.

In Newport, Ms. Forgue reported a split shift schedule and no known cases of the virus.

In S. Kingstown, Mr. Schock reported that the facility is practicing distancing and no known cases of the virus.

Mr. Patenaude gave an overview of the guidance, which was drafted in March as the COVID-19 pandemic began to raise questions within the wastewater profession. As such, the guidance was drafted to both state existing flexibility and to offer other options to the plants so that facility managers and communities could make needed staffing decisions in a timely manner without pausing to inquire about licensure ramifications. (Mr. Patenaude noted that he was unaware of any plant staffing issues to date that had required the flexibility allowed in the guidance.) Mr. Patenaude asked if Board members would like to introduce any modification to the guidance. All members agreed that, as written, the guidance was satisfactory and that if an issue did arise, a remote meeting could be scheduled and held with the appropriate 48-hour notice.

Mr. Patenaude also discussed how DOH changed drinking water regulations to specifically include the term COVID19. Ms. Hoefsmit offered that the DOH did so as an emergency Rule, so it may have been adopted but it would only good for 120 days.

When asked by Mr. Patenaude during public discussion, Messrs. Lauzon and Chapdelaine stated that the guidance was satisfactory.

The April 2020 exams have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 distancing restrictions. Mr. Patenaude asked Board members their thoughts about next steps. Mr. Schock asked if we had applications. Ms. Pena noted that some 25 individuals had applied for those exams. (Mr. Patenaude asked if the Board should refund applicant's money or hold the application for the next exam.) Consensus of the Board was that applicants should be offered the option of a refund or a hold on the application and fee until such time as an exam is held, perhaps during the currently scheduled August 2020 exam.

As for next steps, Mr. Patenaude stated that he is not opposed to holding one-on-one exams at the Board's discretion and that he felt such an option should be offered for Grade 3 and 4 level exams. Mr. Schock suggested that he would support such one-on-one exams if the license was needed as a condition of employment. There was consensus of the Board to support such one-on-one exams, but the applicant would have to justify some hardship or condition of employment to warrant the opportunity. Mr. Patenaude offered to communicate this to the Board.

Mr. Patenaude brought the next item for consideration. Mr. Nick Zabbo, an employee from NBC Fields Point, had contested a question on the Grade 3 exam regarding grit chamber design velocity. Mr. Patenaude presented Mr. Zabbo's point of contention and data supporting Mr. Zabbo's position.

Mr. Patenaude made a motion to approve Mr. Zabbo's request and award the point, thereby elevating the Mr. Zabbo's score from a 69 to 70. Ms. Forgue seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call: Ms. Forgue, Mr. McLynch, Mr. Patenaude and Mr. Schock voting in favor. Mr. Desrosiers abstained as Mr. Zabbo is an employee of the NBC.

In new business:

Mr. Patenaude had asked that the Town of West Warwick update the Board on the license held by the Assistant Superintendent, but no one from the Town was present to provide that update. Mr. Patenaude would require the Town to provide such an update for the next meeting.

NWPCA has a new name: Rhode Island Clean Water Association (RICWA). There is also a new logo. Currently, however, all gatherings and activities have been suspended.

Christina Hoefsmit announced that she will be taking time off for maternity leave in June. She was not sure if another DEM attorney would be assigned to the Board or if Greg Schultz would resume. The Board congratulated Ms. Hoefsmit.

At 10:25 Mr. Patenaude motioned to adjourn. Mr. McLynch seconded. The motion passed with the following roll call: Ms. Forgue, Mr. McLynch, Mr. Patenaude, Mr. Schock, and Mr. Desrosiers all voting in favor.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 6, 2020 at 9:30 a.m. and will be help by teleconference of via a video platform.

The next Regulation meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at 9:30 a.m. and will be help by teleconference of via a video platform.