

Irrigator Advisory Council (IAC) Minutes

Date: Thursday, November 14, 2019
Time: 9:00 am
Location: Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), 12100 Park 35 Circle, Building A, 2nd Floor, Conference Room 202, Austin, Texas 78753

Call to Order

Mr. Micah Reed, IAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. The present members of the council introduced themselves: Mr. David Moulton, Mr. Charles Swanson, Mr. Mark Warden, Mr. Phillip Hathaway, Mr. Brooke Furrh, and Mr. Robert Evans. The latest addition to the council was also introduced: Ms. Donna Starling. Absent was Ms. Valerie Miller.

TCEQ staff also present introduced themselves: Mr. Peter Abel, Mr. Al Fuentes, Ms. Katherine McGlaughlin, Ms. Tamara Calhoun, Ms. Shannon Watson, Mr. Shannon Frazier, Mr. Paul Munguia, and Mr. Jason Robinson.

The members of the public in attendance also introduced themselves.

Approval of the Minutes from Previous Meeting

Any comments on the minutes from the previous meeting held on May 9, 2019 were requested. After no comments were received, Mr. David Moulton made a motion to approve the minutes. A second to the motion was made and the vote to adopt the minutes was unanimous.

TCEQ Landscape Irrigation Program

Mr. Peter Abel

Mr. Peter Abel, TCEQ Landscape Irrigation Program (LIP), provided an update on complaint investigations. Some observations and trends from Fiscal Year 2019 (Sept. 1, 2018 – Aug. 31, 2019) showed that there was a noticeable improvement in the evidence submitted to support complaints. This made issuing violations and enforcement case referrals much more likely. There was also an increase in coordination between local jurisdictions and TCEQ, facilitating greater compliance with the regulations. Although it is very early in the 2020 Fiscal Year, the LIP program is currently processing 10 complaint investigations and has issued 4 Notice of Violation letters.

TCEQ Cross-Connection Control Program

Ms. Katherine McGlaughlin

Ms. Katherine McGlaughlin, TCEQ Cross-Connection Control Program, provided a brief update on the activities of her program. This program is currently accepting recommendations for Cross-Connection Control Program surveys. These are free on-site surveys conducted to determine the status of a water systems program. As of this meeting date, 9 surveys have been conducted. Ms. McGlaughlin also reminded the council of the upcoming meeting of the Cross-Connection Control Subcommittee to be held on December 5, 2019.

Occupational Licensing

Ms. Tamara Calhoun

Ms. Tamara Calhoun, TCEQ Occupational Licensing, provided a brief update on licensing activities. In Fiscal Year 2019, there were 3,418 applications for irrigation licenses received. There were 1,597 tests administered with a pass rate of 57.3%. The total number of licenses issued were 2,709.

The Occupational Licensing section also administers the TCEQ Approved Training Providers Program. Mr. Paul Munguia, Occupational Licensing, provided an update on the new irrigation plot plan to be used by all training providers who provide training to qualify for the irrigation license. Once the training program sends out the new plan, training providers will have 6 months to use up the old plans and begin using the new plan.

Update on Chapter 344 Rule revisions

Mr. Al Fuentes

Mr. Al Fuentes, Program Support Section, provided a brief update on the revisions to the Chapter 344 Landscape Irrigation regulations. He provided examples of changes made to each subchapter of Chapter 344 and provided the following key dates in the rule process:

Proposal Date: 1/15/2020

Public Comment Period: 1/31/2020 – 3/3/2020

Adoption Date: 7/1/2020

Primer on Irrigation System Plumbing

Mr. Doug Goodwin

Mr. Doug Goodwin, VEPO, provided a brief presentation on the importance of using primer when making PVC connections in an irrigation system.

Reimbursements for Council Members

Ms. Sharlette Maney

Ms. Sharlette Maney, TCEQ Administrative Support, provided the council a brief summary of what they need to provide (reservations, receipts, mileage) so that they can get reimbursed for the expenses incurred when participating in this meeting. She also provided a timeline so that reimbursement can be provided timely.

Challenges with Home Builders

Mr. Peter Abel

Mr. Peter Abel, TCEQ Landscape Irrigation Program, provided some information on challenges faced when a brand-new residential subdivision is built with irrigation systems on the new lots. Often, when the house is sold, the information required to be provided to the owner by the irrigator is lost so that the new home owner does not have any information on the functioning of their irrigation system. This is exacerbated when the irrigation system needs repair and the location of valves and pipes is unknown due to the missing plan resulting in increased costs to the home owner. The council decided to work on developing some options for this problem and revisit this topic in the future.

Outreach Opportunities for LIP Staff

General Discussion

The council was reminded of opportunities for the TCEQ to provide updates on the rule revision at organizational meetings, conferences, etc. During the general discussion, several organizations were mentioned who would benefit from a TCEQ update on the rule revisions. TCEQ staff will provide outreach as requests are received.

Meeting dates for next year

Mr. Al Fuentes

Mr. Fuentes provided the following meeting dates for 2020: February 6, May 7, August 6, and November 5.

Individuals Wishing to Address the Council

A discussion was had regarding a complaint investigation. The allegations in the complaint were reviewed and the final determination of the complaint was explained based on the evidence submitted.

Adjournment- Mr. Philip Hathaway made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Mark Warden seconded the motion and Mr. Micah Reed adjourned the meeting at 2:00 pm.