

Irrigator Advisory Council (IAC) Draft Minutes

05/05/2022

Note: These draft meeting minutes are posted for review and comment by meeting attendees. They will be available for comment at the next meeting of the Irrigator Advisory Council at which time they will be voted on for adoption.

Date: Thursday, May 5, 2022

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: Microsoft Teams.

Call to Order

Mark Warden called Meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

The present members of the council introduced themselves: Mr. Mark Warden, Mr. Charles Swanson, Mr. Mark Peterson, Mr. Robert Evans, Mr. David Moulton, Ms. Valerie Miller, Ms. Donna Starling, and Mr. James Garvin. Not in attendance was Mr. Jimmy Burgdorf.

TCEQ individuals in attendance were Marilyn Gates, Mingyuan Wei, Pamela Eziani, Katherine McGlaughlin, Tamara Calhoun, Laura Lopez, and Elizabeth Simmons.

Motion to approve the February 3, 2022, meeting minutes was made by Mark Warden and seconded by Charles Swanson.

TCEQ Program Updates

Mingyuan Wei went over Landscape Irrigation Program (LIP) updates with the incidents that are being received (9) and closed (2) along with investigations being approved (4) since last IAC meeting.

One of the IAC members had a concern of the high turnover rate with LIP. Marilyn Gates assured the Council that LIP has had a high turnover, but TCEQ is working on getting new staff. She said that since COVID the turnover rate has been going up. But there were good candidates in the interview pool. The new hirers will be on board soon and they will have to be trained.

Donna Starling asked about *when the Council will be able to meet in person at TCEQ office.* She said that she missed meeting in person and in-person meeting was of more connecting and felt that the Council were able to complete so much more in in-person meetings.

Marilyn Gates said that TCEQ LIP management is working on it, but we must follow TCEQ guidelines. We want to keep everyone safe and make everyone to feel safe.

Donna Starling asked since we are meeting over teams, if we could possibly end the meetings that are met over TEAMS at 12 noon, and that there is no need for breaks or a lunch.

Mark W said that this sounds like a good idea, and it allows for less travel. He also said that he misses in-person meetings and all the bumping of heads, but the Council got more out of the meetings with in-person meetings. David M. also agreed with Mark W. Marilyn Gates reminded that we must follow TCEQ guidelines.

Donna Starling asked what the process is, and do we have to do an amendment to have the IAC TEAMS meetings end by noon? Mark W said that we would be heading into the charter guideline.

Marilyn Gates asked if anyone had any more question on LIP. There were no questions or comments.

Cross-Connection Control – Katherine McGlaughlin

Updates,

- Hands on training
- High call/email volume

Upcoming trainings/meetings

- Cross-Connection June 2nd at 9:00
- Public Water August 2022
- Backflow case study

No questions

- 1 comment
 - James G says they have a meeting coming up December 5th – 9th, 2022.
- There is a list of Water Pervades.

Occupational Licensing - Tamara Calhoun

Updates

- Updating database
- Developing and testing the database
- There section manager Shannon Watson is leaving on 05/2022
And Tamara C would like to be added as a contact
- 2nd Quarter data were provided:

**Fiscal Year 2022
Landscape Irrigator Program Results
2nd Quarter (December 1, 2021 – February 28, 2022)**

| | New Applications Received | Renewal Applications Received | Total Applications Received | Tests Administered | Tests Passed | Percent Passed | New Licenses Issued | Renewal Licenses Issued | Total Current Licenses |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Landscape Irrigation Inspector | 3 | 4 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 4 | 79 |
| Landscape Irrigation Technician | 105 | 225 | 330 | 96 | 47 | 49% | 42 | 206 | 1,363 |
| Landscape Irrigator | 248 | 397 | 645 | 194 | 120 | 61.9% | 65 | 327 | 6,703 |
| Grand Totals: | 356 | 626 | 982 | 290 | 167 | | 107 | 537 | 8,145 |

*As of November 1, 2021, Occupational Licensing can no longer separate out Spanish versus English exams.

Discussion on work-group progress – Charles Swanson

Take care of Texas requirement for outreach programs– Laura Lopez and Elizabeth Simmons

Graphic what we have going on now

- Marketing 2017
- Videos made on Steps to set-up sprinkler systems
- Blogs they may need to be revamped
- Able to work with licensed irrigators
- Able to put out press releases
- We have ways to help with water conservation

Charles Swanson asked about creating a fact sheet and what is the process to start, and do we need to ask TCEQ first? Elizabeth Simmons said that they can help with putting together the fact sheet, but it may take up to 3 months to complete the product.

Work-group progress

- Updates
- Will be updating numbers
- New hirers licenses
- James, Mark, and Valerie working on Drafting 3
- Hiring Licensed Irrigators
- Providing Builders more irrigation information
- Providing Homeowners information on what they need to know when hiring an irrigator

Donna Starling said that the work group needs data to be up front to act on and can we send a surveyor to ever build?

She asked:

- Who completes the survey?
- What is the process
- What guidelines do they use to regulate data?
- Can we do a survey
- Can we do a survey on a TCEQ letter head or do IAC have a letter head
- How can we find out?

Charles Swanson said that the state has rules recorded. Donna Starling asked, are their requirements recorded for irrigators? Mark W said that everyone is required to follow TCEQ guidelines. Right now, TCEQ doesn't have people to do the work. Donna Starling said that even though there are not enough people, EPA still requires protection of water. Mark W said he agrees with Donna Starling.

Donna Starling asked how much it costs. David M and Mark W asked how we find funding and what is the cost. Marks W said this must start from the bottom to the top. James G said city/government must want to protect the water. Donna Starling asked how we ask people to reserve water.

Mark (Guest): Did you say that any new resident must have an irrigation system, as I do not like them, and I have incentives for homeowner not to use them or remove them in my area.

- We offer coupon to put in peats gravel.
- Who will regulate?

David M said that now every new resident home built must have an irrigation system. Valerie M said where she lives that it's a yes in new and renovated home and that they must have a

sprinkler system and they are also offer homeowners incentive to remove their irrigation system.

- She said that city and governments are on different pages when it comes to water preservation
- She also said that we need to educate the homeowners on water preservation and rebates

Donna Starling asked: do we want to proceed with the bottom to the top?

- Do we want to discuss this more or should we leave it for now?
- Who would like to further this question more?
- Would like to have or see more cities held responsible
- She will be willing to work offline with Valerie and Jessica and comeback to the group with the findings

Valerie M said she would be interested, but there are only two meetings left

- We should consider involving more outside water conservation people

James G said that TCEQ chooses license irrigators

- He asked for help with the task with water conservation

Charles Swanson said if you want to go further you will have to have more data to back you up. Mark W said that statewide will need to find funding and I don't think TCEQ, or IAC can fix the problems, and I don't think it will happen, because in the last 6 years it has not happen. There is restriction with IAC guideline.

Donna Starling said that there is another way, creating video training for high schoolers. They would be able to take the test and get a license to learn irrigation installation. She said this is another way to build up irrigators. Mark W said that high schoolers can take the test now and graduate and work as an irrigator.

Discussion on Evapotranspiration Efforts in Texas- Charles Swanson

He reads TCEQ rules on why ET is important

- You have to have ET data
- Supposed by funded grants and sponsorships
- Working on statewide to provide support by TCEQ
- Working group working on Texas Water Conservation

Update in ET Efforts in Texas - Dustin Compton

- He provided a presentation with PowerPoint slide
- No questions
- 1 Comments:
 - Jennifer said that it's a nice idea to have a national water conservation and it would be nice to be able to pull from other resources

Duston Compton said that we are doing what legislation approve, but it would be nice to have support. Donna Starling and James G agreed that it would be benefited to let our local government to keep ear to the ground. Dustin Compton said the support needs to come from many different groups, and have the groups help with talking about it. Charles Swanson said to have funds and information ready for TCEQ, if you want to talk about it. Mark W said that it's a state level issue and needs to go to legislation and help them understand water conservation, that it is a problem before it becomes a problem. Charles Swanson said that ET has been

installed on some networks, and Texas problem is finding private partners to fund them for a weather station.

Outreach to Irrigation Association- Texas Irrigation Association & others - Mingyuan Wei

- 1 reached out to 8 association
- 1 response from TX IA
- Newsletter

Marilyn Gates said we will get other people in place and will do more outreach. James G asked will there be more TCEQ base rules and regulations trainings, can TCEQ come out and do training and will TEEX be going out to have closer testing sites? Tammy said that for more training contact her. Jessica W said that she wants to be apart to help promote any water conservation.

New Business – IAC nominations, Education and Outreach opportunities – Mingyuan Wei

- Extend our To Do training

Recommendation

- James G - will stay in communicate with Tammy
- 2019 updates
- They haven't heard from TCEQ

Tammy S said that we would love if a TCEQ can provide more information and want to write up a piece for an article.

IAC Nominations

Mingyuan Wei ask for any recommendation for a better way of do the meetings in the fall

- No response

IAC meeting was called to adjourn at 11:24am by Mark W and seconded by Charles Swanson