

# **Irrigation Advisory Council (IAC)**

**August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023**

Charles Swanson called meeting to order at 9:02 am. The members present were Charles Swanson, David Moulton, Norman Werback, Donna Starling, Dj Seeger, Mark Peterson, while Jimmy Burgdorf and Monique Cogburn were present virtually. TCEQ staff members present were Thomas Minucci and Jayme Martone of the Landscape Irrigation Program (LIP), team leader of the Technical Program Team Joseph Hopkins, Kathrine McGlaughlin of the Cross Connection Control Program, and Teresa Etheredge in the Occupational Licensing Section. There were 6 public members present. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved at 9:06 am with no objections.

After the previous meeting minutes were approved the LIP team, Cross Connection Control, and Occupational licensing staff members gave their respective program updates.

Jayme presented the LIP numbers stating since September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, LIP has received 75 complaints, has 17 open investigations, and has approved 62 investigations. We are starting to do in-person investigations and did our first one recently. Also mentioned the ride along with San Antonio Water System, and that we will be at the Texas Nursey and Landscaping Association (TNLA) expo this upcoming week. Described how we try and refer complaints to cities with populations greater than 20,000. David Moulton recommended to refer complaints to the mayor. Charles asked about the ratio of ad complaints with people who have licenses vs non licensed. Joseph mentioned that we are really trying to get more outreach to the municipalities and let them take over more enforcement. Also stated TCEQ LIP investigators will become more field oriented, which is more consistent with other agency programs.

Kathrine McGlaughlin gave the cross connection program updates. They are getting frequent calls about technical assistance, they presented to the American Backflow Prevention Association (ABPA), they have their PWS conference next week, and the next Cross Connection Control Program meeting is September 7<sup>th</sup>. They will have a plumber inspector present doing a presentation to discuss inspection forms and testing.

Teresa Etheredge gave the licensing update including the licensing statistics (located at the end of this transcript). Also mentioned were the new bills that involve privacy. TCEQ licensing is looking at creating two portals, one for the public and one for industry/agency. DJ had a question that as a company would they need to get each license holder login to verify trainings. Teresa said they are still working to figure out if those are considered personal identifying information. They are still working out some details and welcome any ideas, Dj offered the idea that one of the portals could resemble the State of Texas Environmental Electronic Reporting System (STEERS) program. Teresa stated that ALL identifying information will be removed from the public site, except potentially training/Continuing Education Unit (CEU) transcript. Charles mentioned that they should have a notice for current license holders. Charles also asked if she knew the different number of exams that were in person vs computer based. He was curious about the pass/fail rate and if it has changed at all due to the switch to all online exams, also if they [licensing] could tell which parts of the exam most people failed. Teresa said she hasn't noticed a difference in pass/fail rates since transition to online only, she believes it comes down to the tester and how well they test. Charles wanted to make sure they aren't at a disadvantage since they are trained on using paper. Charles made an official request for the breakdown by test section for pass/fail rates. Teresa asked for some time to let people get more acclimated to the new way of taking the exam, & if there are any problems with the actual questions on the exam for them to share with the licensing team ([OLtraining@tceq.texas.gov](mailto:OLtraining@tceq.texas.gov)). Norm had a question about the numbers presented, asked why we have twice the number of tests administered vs applications. Also asked if we have numbers on

first time testers and their pass/fail rate, Teresa stated they don't have the specifics on first time vs retesters. Norm asked since hydrologic are the highest fail rate and if maybe it's the training curriculum and if we could have some professional curriculum developer could come in and help close that gap, Teresa said that they don't have the data to support that and it would come down to the individual and their math/testing skills, time in-between the training course, and that it may not be accurate to place the blame on the trainers.

Charles called for break at 10:02, and will resume at 10:18.

The web content group started off; DJ Seeger presented his concept for a new web design. His aim is to reduce the amount of clicks it takes to get to the LIP webpage. Made a suggestion that we could have an area that advertises licensed irrigation companies that opt-in and pay a small fee to be presented on the website. Also has a section about backflow prevention methods, related rules, and approved devices for different situations. He wants to make it very easy to understand for system owners who aren't as technically savvy. Also has a section for filing complaints, anonymous complaints were also discussed as well as the new complaint procedure that is being implemented. Mark asked about an agency workgroup that the IAC can partner with to help revamp the entire agency website, Jayme said we will ask around. Dj asked if LIP could have its own website, similar to Take Care of Texas (TCOT), both are under the TCEQ umbrella, but TCOT has a standalone website. Dj wants to have the statement about irrigation being regulated in Texas at the bottom of the page to make it easier for LI's to get & use it. Dj presented his website "hierarchy" for the different tabs (about irrigation, information for customers, education & licensing, rules & regulations) that cascade down for more information on each topic.

Donna started off for the inspector survey discussing the questionnaire. She believes that the hardest part of sending off the survey is finding who to send it to, maybe create some kind of letter to send along with to the Mayor of each city explaining the survey in an attempt to get more higher quality data. Donna had interns track down contacts at municipalities with >20,000 for who to send the questionnaire to. Norm said maybe add the number of connections they have. Dj mentioned rewording question number 7 about permit price to what the permit fees/permit fee structure are, since not all municipalities have flat rates. Mark had a comment about question 3, who is in charge of enforcing water restrictions, from having an individual's name to the department. Contact information was found for 138 cities. Dj had a question about the 20,000 rule and if it only applies to cities, or also the water purveyor, and was told that it's cities only. Norm mentioned having them add their PWS (Public Water Supplier) ID if they have one. Jayme mentioned she added a question at the end of the survey asking what water conservation programs they have, but was suggested to change it to be more irrigation specific. It was discussed that based on the response received, to possibly send it out on a semi-regular basis. David M said we should send it to the Mayor's Office to try and get better responses. Charles asked for a follow-up on the job task analysis survey and Jayme made a note to have OL give an update at the next meeting.

Discussion on the RG-466 (Landscape Irrigation Program: Implementation) and any updates that it could use. Dj said adding a sample contract, or sample agreement language could be helpful. Contracts and warranty information and requirements were discussed, Charles mentioned that would also fall on who is inspecting this and making sure things are done by the book. Mark P asked for clarification on what we [TCEQ] are asking, and was told for updates to wording, making sure it has current rules, etc. Dj wants more clarification on homeowner installation in relation to builders and them not having licensed people install the systems. It was mentioned that the rules are needed to be updated. Charles mentioned adding guidance on the rules for municipalities with >20,000.

The new flyers were discussed since they are ready to be distributed. We will bring copies of the flyers to the TNLA. The council said they look great and are excited they'll be in circulation going forward.

One public member wished to address the council. He asked if there are any sample documents for inspectors? Jayme mentioned that we don't currently have one, but through the inspector survey we could try and use that data to create one. Charles mentioned that in the inspector survey that we are asking for each municipality to include their own inspection documents, so once we start getting responses that is something we can create.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:24 am.

	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	5	6	11	4	2	50.0%	3	5	76
Landscape Irrigation Technician	134	43	177	175	79	45.1%	71	58	1,420
Landscape Irrigator	324	523	847	620	366	59.0%	182	581	6,808
Grand Totals:	463	572	1,035	799	447	n/a	256	644	8,304