

Irrigation Advisory Council Minutes

November 7, 2024

Call to Order

Introductions

Mr. Charles Swanson called the meeting to order at 9:00am.

The members of the council present via Teams included: Mr. Charles Swanson, Mr. DJ Seeger, Mr. David Moulton, Mr. James Burgdorf, Mr. James Garvin, Mr. Mark Peterson, Mr. Norm Werback, Ms. Monique Cogburn, and Ms. Donna Starling.

Mr. Nathan Bowen, Vice President of Policy and Industry Advancement for the Irrigation Association, as well as new members joining the IAC in February 2025, Mr. Sergio Martinez, Mr. Remmington Holt, and Ms. Paula Szymanski, were introduced.

TCEQ individuals present were Mr. Joseph Hopkins, Mr. Thomas Minucci, Ms. Jayme Martone, and Ms. Theresa Ethridge.

Approval of Previous Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. James Garvin to approve the minutes for the August 2024 IAC meeting as they were written, the motion was seconded by Mr. David Moulton. The vote to adopt was unanimously.

TCEQ Program Updates

Cross-Connection Control

Mr. Thomas Minucci shared the update on behalf of Ms. Katherine McGlaughlin with the TCEQ Cross Connection Control Program, who was not in attendance. The program continues to complete form approvals for CSI and BPAT forms and respond to various technical questions. The program has welcomed a new staff member, who will be assisting with CCC surveys and more. They've participated in various technical presentations for internal TCEQ, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and Texas Department of State Health Services Staff.

The Cross Connection Control Program with the Landscape Irrigation Program had the opportunity to attend the San Antonio Irrigation Association's 1st Irrigation Competition and let two Direct Assistance Modules in the Abilene and Houston Regions in September.

If you are with a water system and would like technical assistance related to your cross-connection control program, please reach out to the program.

Occupational Licensing

Ms. Theresa Ethridge provided statistics on the pass/fail rates and total number of license holders. She also discussed a recent proposed rule change which would be general to all licensing, not specific to landscape irrigation. She mentioned that this proposed rule would include a one-time requirement for fingerprinting when submitting a new license application or renewing a license to TCEQ. Mr. James Garvin mentioned that it was a simple process with many locations to get the fingerprinting done at.

A question was asked by Mr. DJ Seeger about getting a criminal history done before an employer enrolled staff in classes and submitted an application for a new license and Ms. Ethridge directed him to the Criminal History Pre-Evaluations option on the licensing webpage, which is only available for new applicants.

Landscape Irrigation Program

Ms. Jayme Martone gave an overview of the investigations conducted by the Landscape Irrigation Program during FY24, which spanned from September 1, 2023, to August 31, 2024. This included information on which counties/regions complaints were received from, investigation outcomes, general violation types.

Mr. Thomas Minucci discussed the recently completed IAC nomination period and welcomed the newly selected members, which were officially approved by the Commission on November 6, 2024. The program received a significantly higher number of nominees than previous nomination periods and received nominations from all of our license types, including Landscape Irrigators, Irrigation Inspectors, and Irrigation Technicians. Mr. Minucci thanked all the nominees and encouraged them to stay involved with the IAC. The newly selected members will officially begin their terms on February 1, 2025.

Mr. Charles Swanson asked if there was a plan for the IAC meetings to go back to in-person meetings instead of virtual. Mr. Joseph Hopkins stated that there was not a plan to return to in-person meetings at this time.

Discussion on work-group progress

Web Content Work Group

Mr. DJ Seeger led a discussion on proposed website updates, including new and revised sections on the IAC, homeowner information and licensing.

Mr. Mark Peterson stated that the Hiring Licensed fliers previously developed by an IAC work group has been positively received.

Survey Work Group

Ms. Donna Starling and Mr. Charles Swanson led a discussion about the survey that was developed by the IAC in order to evaluate how cities are currently conducting their irrigation programs, including information about permits, inspections, and enforcement practices.

Ms. Starling discussed the IAC putting together a presentation for the Commissioners or Legislators, specifically in regard to creating standards for the permit process and inspections, as part of a possible rule change petition. Mr. Joseph Hopkins provided information on the rule petition process to the council.

Ms. Szymanski, Mr. Garvin, Mr. Swanson, Ms. Starling, Mr. Martinez, and Mr. Werback were all interested in attending a work group meeting for this topic before the next IAC meeting.

RG-466

Mr. Charles Swanson gave a brief overview of RG-466, a TCEQ publication which explains the landscape irrigation rules in plain language and has not been updated in over ten years. The Council discussed the importance of updating this regulatory guidance document and decided that they would discuss putting together a work group for this topic after the newly selected members join the council in February 2025.

New Business

Honorary License Consideration

Mr. Charles Swanson summarized the information that was previously provided regarding a request for an Honorary License made to the Council and discussed the possibility of creating a standardized application for future requests, for which he had put together a list of possible questions. Mr. Seeger noted that an honorary license should be reserved for those with exceptional contributions to the industry. Mr. Garvin added that previously it was held in high esteem. A discussion took place about various possible questions to be asked about someone in order to receive a honorary license.

A motion to deny the current request for an honorary license based on the information provided to the council was made by Mr. Norm Werback and seconded by Mr. Mark Peterson. The motion was unanimously approved.

Individuals wishing to address the Council

No members of the public were interested in addressing the council.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25am.