

IRRIGATOR ADVISORY COUNCIL (IAC)

JUNE 10, 2009

MEETING MINUTES

12100 Park 35 Circle, Building A, Room 202

Austin, Texas

9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

1. Call to order.

Chairman Goodwin called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

Attendees:

Council Members:

Doug Goodwin, DeVille Hubbard, David Bell, Emilio Escobar, Karen Guz, Nora Mullarkey, Michael Murr, and Rusty Tucker

TCEQ Staff:

Tony Franco, Sandra Mota, Candy Garrett, Richard Allen, Jeff Walls, Joel Klumpp, Susan Hier, Scott Swanson, and Linda Saladino

Visitors:

Joe Smolinski, Todd Magatagan, Gene Reagan, Jeffrey Knight, Frank Chaloupka, Olga Chaloupka, Doug Christensen, Jerry Lewis, and Kelly Hall

2. Consider approval of minutes from the February 25, 2009 meeting.

Mr. Bell moved that the minutes be accepted. Mr. Escobar seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

3. Special Recognition.

Chairman Goodwin noted that there were no individuals receiving the Honorary License title at this meeting. Chairman Goodwin encouraged Council members to discuss the Honorary License at meetings and events.

Ms. Saladino introduced Brian Lehmukuhle, Sarita Nazareth, and Barbara Mendieta as additional staff for the Training Providers work group.

4. Special Presentation.

Mr. Doug Christensen, Accord Irrigation Technologies, provided an overview of work in providing water audits. Mr. Christensen identified the top areas for increased water conservation as (1) controller programming – inaccurate or duplicate programs, (2) poor design, and (3) leaks and poor maintenance. Mr. Christensen stated that any cost of complying with the Chapter 344 rule requirements that became effective on January 1, 2009, could be recouped in a small residential system within five years. Mr. Christensen stated that better educating the end users of irrigation systems on the appropriate amount of water needed by various plants would increase water conservation. Mr. Christensen noted that some areas are not requiring the use of a three-quarters inch meter for irrigation system because small meters are wearing out early.

5. Hear from individuals wishing to address the Council.

There were no individuals wishing to address the Council.

6. Receive, Discuss and Act on Staff Reports:

Mr. Franco reported that there were no new legislative mandates requiring a Chapter 344 Landscape Irrigation rule update. However, staff has noted a couple of areas in the rules that could be improved, and would request approval from Agency management to proceed with a limited rule change that would not open all portions of the rules for comments.

(a) Outreach Activities. Ms. Garrett discussed the activities that staff had participated in since February 2009 and the activities projected through December 2009. Ms. Garrett has sent an article to the Texas Turf and Irrigation Association that lists training opportunities and testing locations for the Irrigation Technician license.

(b) Irrigation Technician Licensing, Training and Testing. Ms. Garrett reported on the status of the Irrigation Technician license. There are currently 11 licensed Irrigation Technicians and 6 licenses are pending receipt of completed applications. The English version of the Irrigation Technician examination has been sent to each Regional Office for administration. In the next few weeks, copies of the examination will be sent to the Texas Engineering Extension Service for administration.

(c) Irrigation Inspector Licensing, Training and Testing. Ms. Garrett reported that there are currently 26 licensed Irrigation Inspectors.

(d) Irrigator Licensing, Training, Testing and Renewal. Ms. Garrett reported that there were currently 5,786 current licensed irrigators. It was noted

that Irrigators with license that expire between April 1 and December 31, 2009, will be issued a license valid for one year. The cost of the one-year license is \$37. Only eight hours of training will be required to renew the irrigator license in 2010. The purpose of the one-year renewal is to balance the workload in 2012 when a large number of irrigation technician licenses is expected to expire. When the licenses are renewed in 2010, the license will be valid for three years.

(e) TCEQ Enforcement Actions. Ms. Garrett reported that there had been 56 Notices of Violation issued since September 1, 2008. Unlicensed individuals received 36 Notices of Violation and licensed individuals received 20 Notices of Violation. Since September 1, 2008, there have been 37 Notices of Enforcement, 37 to unlicensed individuals and 15 to licensed individuals. There have been 85 investigations conducted since September 1, 2008. Since September 1, 2008, there have been 132 incidents closed.

(f) Demonstration of Computer Based Testing. Ms. Hier demonstrated Computer Based Testing. Currently 10 institutions have signed contracts to offer Computer Based Testing. Ms. Hier is working on making the Irrigation Technician exam available by computer in the next few weeks. Ms. Hier reported that Computer Based Testing would offer immediate pass/fail information. If an examination is passed using Computer Based Testing, the license is issued within a week. Ms. Hier reported that the current testing facilities were charging \$15 to \$50 for the examination.

(g) Backflow and Cross-Connection Subcommittee. Mr. Klumpp reported that the Cross-Connection Control Subcommittee had been meeting for about two years to address issues related to potential Cross-Connections. Mr. Klumpp stated that the subcommittee is concerned that lack of or improper maintenance of the required y-type strainer installed when a Double Check is installed below ground could lead to a potential cross-connection. Mr. Klumpp reported that although the TCEQ only requires annual inspections of backflow prevention devices used in health hazards, many municipalities are requiring all backflow prevention devices to be tested on a more frequent basis. Mr. Klumpp stated that the Cross-Connection Subcommittee holds open meetings and provided the webpage address at:

http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/permitting/water_supply/pdw/trot/cccgrou p.html.

Lunch. The Council adjourned at 11:35 a.m. for a one-hour lunch break. Chairman Goodwin reconvened the meeting at 12:40 p.m.

7. Receive, Discuss, and Act on Committee Reports:

(a) Rules – Update on Local Ordinances. No report from the Committee.

(b) Education. The Committee suggested that an overview of Chapter 288 relating to Water Plans for Conservation and Drought be included in discussions of watering needs. Topics to be included in “water audit” courses were discussed and TCEQ staff will work with Committee members to define the appropriate topics.

(c) Water Conservation. No report from the Committee. The Council discussed steps that could be taken to prepare irrigators for the next water conservation actions that will be taken by cities and water districts. Education is a key to understanding how to efficiently conserve water. Ideas such as training and rebates were discussed.

(d) Legislative. Mr. Bell reported that three pieces of legislation were introduced. One bill that will impact all TCEQ licensed individuals involved criminal histories.

(f) Acceptable Topics for Irrigation Courses. See the discussion above on “Education”.

8. Discuss and Act on EPA’s Revised Draft WaterSense Water-Efficient Single-Family New Home Specification and certification of irrigators.

Ms. Garrett reported that there had been several calls with EPA to discuss obtaining acceptance of a TCEQ irrigator’s license meeting the training and testing requirement to be a WaterSense Partner. Currently, there is no mechanism to obtain that approval but TCEQ staff will continue to work with EPA on future opportunities to receive recognition for the TCEQ license.

The Council discussed EPA’s Revised Draft WaterSense Water-Efficient Single-Family New Home Specification. Generally, the Council would like to see more flexibility in Topic 4.1.1.1; believe that drip irrigation is a viable option in landscaped areas less than four feet wide in Topic 4.1.2; and believe that Topic 4.2 is poorly worded. Mr. Hubbard moved and Mr. Bell seconded a motion for Chairman Goodwin and Mr. Hubbard to draft a letter for submittal to EPA to comment on the draft specification. Mr. Goodwin encouraged Council members to send in comments.

9. Receive, Discuss and Act on New Business and Additional Items of Interest.

Mr. Escobar noted that the Rio Grande Water Master will be the guest speaker at the November 18, 2009 meeting.

10. Adjourn.

Mr. Escobar moved and Mr. Bell seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:10 p.m.