

# Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

## WATER UTILITY OPERATOR LICENSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

January 20, 2021

9:00 a.m.

*Virtual Meeting through Microsoft Teams*

### Meeting Minutes

#### Members Attending

Larry Bell  
David Garza  
Paul Kite  
Crystal Ybanez  
David Harris  
Karen Menard  
Cory Moose  
Joseph McDaniel  
Celia Eaves  
Russell Hamilton

#### Members Absent

Jake Hollingsworth  
Kenneth Hutchins  
Robb Starr

#### Visitors

James Fischer  
Gary Sober  
Paul King  
Nichol Howell  
John Taylor  
D. Pullin

#### TCEQ Staff Attending

Jaya Zyman, Occupational Licensing and Registration Division (OLRD)  
Shannon Watson, OLRD  
Paul Munguia, OLRD  
James Murphy, OLRD  
Laia Robichaux, OLRD  
Benjamin Sakmar, OLRD  
Tamara Calhoun, OLRD  
Laurie Fleet, WQD  
Dorothy Young, WSD

#### Call to order:

Quorum check – quorum present.

A motion to approve the meeting minutes from October 14, 2020 was made by David Garza, seconded by Joseph McDaniel, all members approved.

#### Attendee introduction:

All current and new members introduced themselves.

#### Water Supply Division (WSD) Updates: Dorothy Young

##### Plan Review Team (PRT)

The team is accepting electronic plans and submittals along with hard copy submittals. Submittals may be sent via email to [PTRS@tceq.texas.gov](mailto:PTRS@tceq.texas.gov). From October through December 2020, the team processed 667 plans and specifications submittals. The team is also pleased to welcome Jose Castillo, who started on May 2, 2020.

##### Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey

The survey is very important for water system's funding as the sum of the state needs are used to determine the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) allotment Texas will receive. The DWSRF has become a major funding source of water system projects in Texas and careful completion of the survey benefits many Texans. The survey includes all systems with a population greater than 100,000 and a sampling of systems with populations less than 100,000. Data collection began January 1, 2021. TCEQ appreciates PWSs working with

staff and its contractor to accomplish this important task

### **Texas Optimization Program (TOP)**

From October through December 2020, the TOP staff and contractors assisted at the City of Lake Jackson to help remediate and restore the distribution system. They also provided training to PWS operators and managers. TOP has been working with Technical Review and Oversight Team (TROT) staff to provide online training to small groups of representatives of low-pressure membrane plants. The training covers new monthly reporting requirements and provides guidance for verifying compliance in low-pressure membrane plants.

### **Drought**

As of January 5, 2021, the drought status of the state is approximately 8% exceptional drought, 11% extreme drought, 18% severe drought, 20.5% moderate drought, 24% abnormally dry, and 17% not experiencing drought. Additionally, the state's monitored water supply reservoirs are 82.2% full, a decrease of 3.5% since July 20.

### **Technical Review and Oversight Team (TROT)**

From October through December 2020, TROT processed 413 Exception and Alternative Capacity Requirement requests.

### **Response and Capacity Development Team (RCDT)**

From October through December 2020, RCDT processed 178 free on-site Financial, Managerial, and Technical (FMT) Assistance assignments made for public water systems. This number excludes assignments made for wastewater systems and contractor training events.

*If you would like some FMT assistance – please see <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater/fmt>  
And/or email [FMT@tceq.texas.gov](mailto:FMT@tceq.texas.gov)*

### **Capacity Development**

Do you need funding or other assistance? The Texas Water Infrastructure Coordination Committee (TWICC) is an umbrella organization designed to help water and wastewater systems find funding and other assistance. TWICC is made up of state and federal funding, regulatory and assistance agencies including the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Texas Rural Water Association (TRWA), Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), General Land Office (GLO), Texas American Water Works Association (TAWWA) and Communities Unlimited. The last TWICC meeting was hosted remotely by PUC on November 18, 2020. The next TWICC meeting is being hosted remotely by Communities Unlimited on January 20, 2021. If you are interested in talking to TWICC members about potential projects, funding and other assistance you can contact Dorothy Young at [dorothy.young@tceq.texas.gov](mailto:dorothy.young@tceq.texas.gov). Information on TWICC members, funding sources and other resource links are available at [www.twicc.org](http://www.twicc.org).

Do you know a water system that is helping other water systems? There is a new category in the TCEQ Public Drinking Water Recognition program called Water Partners: Water Systems Helping Water Systems. For details, visit: [https://www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater/recognition/water\\_partners.html](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater/recognition/water_partners.html).

Staff continues to monitor and provide additional resources to one High-Priority system and two Watch List systems until their current projects are completed.

### **Assistance for At-Risk Public Water Systems**

Staff continue to monitor eleven systems in receivership, six systems under temporary management and thirteen systems designated as “Primary At-Risk.”

### **Cross-Connection Control**

Program staff are utilizing several options for remote Cross-Connection Control Program (CCCP) Surveys to provide technical assistance. The TCEQ Cross-Connection Control Subcommittee conducted its most recent quarterly meeting remotely on December 3, 2020. It was well attended with participation amongst members and new members continue to attend. Topics discussed include creating a workgroup for Data Capture and a discussion on the Lead/Copper rule. Interested attendees can subscribe to meeting notifications on the TCEQ [CCC Subcommittee webpage](#). The Cross-Connection Control Program continues to receive many requests for

approval of alternate forms.

## **Water Quality Division (WQD) Updates: Laurie Fleet**

### **Public Notice Publication**

Public Notices need to be published and proof of this publication needs to be submitted to TCEQ within the given deadlines. At the end of 2019, the WQD started tracking when public notices are mailed and when proof of publication is received. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the WQD suspended returning applications for failure to publish in a timely manner; however, monitoring has resumed, and applications may be returned for failure to comply. Before the application is returned, a certified letter will be sent giving 30 days to submit proof of publication documents.

### **Renewal of Wastewater Discharge Applications**

In wastewater discharge permits there is a provision that requires the permittee to submit an application for renewal at least 180 days before the expiration date of the permit. Historically this has not been enforced; however, the 180-day requirement will now be enforced. Failure to comply may result in a violation.

David Garza asked what fine may be associated with the violation. The WQD would not handle the fine aspect of the violation, this would be sent to the Enforcement Division for their determination. Here is a link to the TCEQ Penalty Policy:

[https://www.tceq.texas.gov/assets/public/comm\\_exec/pubs/rg/rg253/penaltypolicy2021.pdf](https://www.tceq.texas.gov/assets/public/comm_exec/pubs/rg/rg253/penaltypolicy2021.pdf)

## **Occupational Licensing Updates: Shannon Watson**

### **Old Business:**

Status of Computer-Based Testing (CBT). There are currently ten new CBT centers that are either live or have expressed interested and contacts are being developed. Specifically, the South Plains Technical College contract in the Lubbock region is very close to being finalized. Special “thank you” to Karen Menard for providing contacts in this region. We are again reaching out to Texas Tech University to see if they would be a CBT center. UT-RGV in Brownsville has been approved and is offering TCEQ licensing exams on CBT.

### **New Business:**

#### **Licensing Statistics**

Tamara Calhoun presented the FY21\_Q1 statistical numbers for the licensing team (attached). This data shows the number of applications received and processed, as well as the pass rates of each exam. The revised Class A Water was released in October 2020 and the pass rate has decreased, which was expected. The pass rate for this exam is being monitored.

#### **Wastewater Class A Exam Update**

Shannon Watson informed the group that the training team is working to remove the essay questions from the Wastewater A exam to be replaced with multiple choice questions. This revision will format the exam to be in line with other occupational licensing exams and allows the exam to be delivered via CBT. We reached out to WUOLAC asking for recommendations for a Subject Matter Expert to help develop wastewater questions and we appreciate your input. Our goal is to have all new questions submitted by August 31, 2021.

#### **Administering Paper Exams**

Paper exams are currently not being administered at any TCEQ region. Paper exams that are not available via CBT were administered at the central office from September through December 2020. Due to the significant increase in reported COVID-19 cases, the central office stopped administering paper exams for January and February 2021. In February, TCEQ management will reevaluate whether paper exams can safely be administered. When paper exams are administered, only the exams not available via CBT will be offered, which include the Wastewater A and Spanish exams. The other exams not offered via CBT are currently managed by TCEX. The [TCEQ OL website](#) will be updated with the latest information.

### **Other:**

David Garza asked the group if any municipalities have received the vaccine due to the nature of the occupation. The group had not heard of vaccines being prioritized based on working at a utility.

## **Adjourn**

Larry Bell made a motion to adjourn, Paul Kite seconded the motion.

## **Contacts:**

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