

Irrigator Advisory Council (IAC) Minutes

Date: Thursday, February 6, 2020
Time: 9:00am
Location: Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), 12100 Park 35 Circle, Building A, 2nd Floor, Conference Room 202, Austin, Texas 78753

Call to Order

Mr. Micah Reed

Mr. Micah Reed, IAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. The present members of the council introduced themselves: Mr. David Moulton, Mr. Charles Swanson, Mr. Mark Warden, Mr. Brooke Furrh, Ms. Donna Starling, Ms. Valerie Miller, and Mr. Robert Evans. Absent was Mr. Phillip Hathaway.

TCEQ staff also introduced themselves: Ms. Marilyn Gates, Ms. Chelsea Atkinson, Mr. Al Fuentes, Mr. Charlie Middleton, Ms. Tamara Calhoun, Ms. Jaya Zyman, Mr. Michael DeLaCruz, Mr. Dan McReynolds, and Mr. Jason Robinson.

The members of the public in attendance also introduced themselves.

Approval of the Minutes from Previous Meeting

Any comments on the minutes from the previous meeting held on November 14, 2019 were requested. After no comments were received, Mr. David Moulton made a motion to approve the minutes. A second to the motion was made by Robert Evans and the vote to adopt the minutes was unanimous.

TCEQ Landscape Irrigation Program

Mr. Al Fuentes

Mr. Al Fuentes, TCEQ Landscape Irrigation Program (LIP), briefly talked about the complaints received. At the time of the meeting, 18 complaints were being investigated. The most common complaints continue to be related to advertising.

TCEQ Cross-Connection Control Program

Mr. Charlie Middleton

Mr. Charlie Middleton, TCEQ Cross-Connection Control Program, provided an update on the activities of his program. Staff continue to conduct on-site Cross-Connection Control Program Surveys. One of the many topics covered during these surveys is Landscape irrigation. A new notification system is being developed to let subscribers know about news, events, and meetings. The next meeting of the TCEQ Cross-Connection Control Subcommittee will be March 5th. For more information please visit the website at: <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/drinkingwater/cross-connection>

Occupational Licensing

Ms. Tamara Calhoun

Ms. Tamara Calhoun, TCEQ Occupational Licensing, provided statistics on pass fail rates and licenses issued.

	Tests Administered	Tests Passed	Percent Passed	Licenses Issued (Renewals included)	Total Current Licenses
Landscape Irrigation Inspector	4	1	25%	2	80
Landscape Irrigation Technician	143	59	41.3%	108	1,435
Landscape Irrigator	234	137	58.5%	644	6,882
Totals	381	197	51.7%	754	8,397

Spanish vs English	Tests Administered	Tests Passed	Percent Passed
Landscape Irrigation Technician - English	106	51	48.2%
Landscape Irrigation Technician - Spanish	37	8	21.7%

Ms. Calhoun also spoke on the challenges of administering the irrigator test in Spanish. The Licensed Irrigation Technician exam has been administered in English/Spanish since June, 2009. Of concern is the translator's knowledge of irrigation systems and the terms used in the industry and the regulations. An option discussed was to compare this test to other tests in Spanish and the statistics.

Enforcement

Mr. Michael DeLaCruz

Mr. Michael DeLaCruz, TCEQ Enforcement Division, provided a presentation on the enforcement process. He covered the importance of evidence including the correct spelling of names and addresses. When possible, the enforcement process involves working in conjunction with the local jurisdiction as well as the TCEQ regional office.

Mr. Dan McReynolds, TCEQ Environmental Crimes, explained how critical it was to obtain adequate evidence and how the case may not be prosecuted if the evidence is not strong enough. He provided examples of the many other complaints investigated by TCEQ investigators which limits the amount of time they can spend investigating landscape irrigation complaints. Compliance is best achieved if the local jurisdiction investigates the complaint. He further explained how it was necessary for the landscape irrigation industry to assist in enforcement efforts by policing themselves.

Rule Update

Mr. Al Fuentes

Mr. Al Fuentes spoke on the revisions to the rules governing landscape irrigation (Chapter 344). There have been outreach efforts to provide updates to irrigator associations (Pan Handle Irrigation Association, Lonestar Expo, East Texas Irrigation Association). These presentations are accentuated by valuable question and answer segments where misinformation is corrected. A few of the key dates in the rule process:

Public Comment Period: 1/31/2020 – 3/3/2020

Adoption Date: 7/1/2020

Mr. Fuentes also described an Interim Charge received by the TCEQ and expressed the need to develop a plan in order to meet the requirements.

End of Year Report from the IAC

Mr. Micah Reed

Mr. Micah Reed, IAC Chair, requested information on the content of the Annual Report to be generated by the council for the TCEQ. During the general discussion, it was determined that

accomplishments in 2019, goals, and financial data should be covered in the report. The council will work to get the report finished by March.

Education and New Products

Mr. Micah Reed

Mr. Micah Reed, requested a presentation from Mr. Jerry Lewis on the Basics of Irrigation to cover this topic. Mr. Jerry Lewis, Sundance Training, provided a presentation on the basics of irrigation systems. He covered using the:

- Right Parts – allows for the correct functioning of the irrigation system
- Right Sizes and Amounts – allows for the efficient application of water
- Right sequence – allows for proper installation and addressing the hydraulic conditions.

Individuals wishing to address the council

One person addressed the council. He expressed his concern that the council was not representative of the actual irrigators in Texas. He also wished for a process where experienced irrigation individuals could have an easier route to getting a license. During the general discussion, it was determined that the council had valid experience and qualifications representative of irrigators and it was explained how critically important it was to gain all the technical knowledge required to get a license.

Adjournment

Mr. Micah Reed, made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Charles Swanson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 pm.