

Irrigator Advisory Council Approved Minutes

Note: These draft meeting minutes are posted for review and comment by meeting attendees. They will be available for comment at the next meeting of the Irrigator Advisory Council at which time they will be voted on for adoption.

Date: Thursday, May 6, 2021

Time: 9:00am

Location: This meeting was held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

Call to Order

Mark warden, IAC Chair, called to order and introduced himself and Charles Swanson, Vice Chair, introduced himself. Other IAC Members present Valerie Miller, Bobby Evans, Donna Starling, David Moulton. Jimmy Bergdorf, James Garvin, and Mark Peterson introduced themselves as new members of the IAC.

TCEQ staff introduced themselves: Shannon Frazier, Chelsea Atkinson, Kenneth Smith.

Donna starling made motion to approve minutes for November 5, 2020. Motion was approved. David Moulton Motion to approve January 2021 special meeting, Mark Warden seconded. January meeting approved.

TCEQ Program Updates:

Chelsea Atkinson stated that since the last IAC meeting in November, the TCEQ has received 25 new incidents, has opened 7 investigations, and has approved 4 investigations. 2 incidents have been closed, and 7 investigations are awaiting final approval. The most common complaints received pertained to unlicensed irrigation work and advertising without a valid license.

Charles Middleton gave a brief on Cross-Connection Control updates.

- Regular stream of emails. Continuing to get requests for approvals on CSIs and BPAT and maintenance forms. Also getting requests from online form storage companies looking for approval. Form approvals are PWS specific, so each one needs its own.
- Kenny Dykes will be working a lot more hands-on with cross-conn.
- Also received a list of systems with program support to identify deficiencies without citing violations. Gave a brief summary of what a cross-conn survey is.

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Occupational Licensing

Occupational Licensing [COVID response page](#) updated. Of note are the following updates to licensees:

- Irrigator exams continue to be offered by TEEEX (offered since June)
- Conversion of Irrigator exam to CBT will begin next FY, no details or time frames available at this time
- [Paper exams](#) are being held once a month at TCEQ Central Office for Wastewater A and Spanish-version exams only. [Registration](#) is open online.

James Garvin asked – Lubbock and West Texas had a lot of people passing their courses but had difficulty finding places to take exam for their irrigator exam. Expressed difficulties for licensees to have to drive many long miles in order to test.

Tamara Calhoun – more opportunities with CBT version of exam occurs, but irrigators looking for a license will need to speak to TEEEX

Jimmy Bergdorf asked for a way to see increase in decline/renewals in licensing info. TC – provides that info every quarter.

Thank you from management to outgoing members

Kristi Mills-Jurach, Deputy Director PSEAD, recognized the following individuals for everything they've done the past 6 years, and what they've helped do to shape the IAC. Kristi also spoke to their qualifications.

- Micah Reed
- Brooke Furrh
- Phillip Hathaway

Rule and Guidance Update

Kenny Smith spoke on RG-470- It is updated and is now available on the LIP website
RG-466 Revisions and Updates – RG-466 is currently undergoing revisions
Shannon Frazier spoke briefly on RG-466

- Interim Charge Update
Shannon Frazier stated Interim Charge is completed, document is ready for if and when the Texas Legislature reviews Interim Charges from the previous legislative session.

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Process for Submitting a Recommendation to TCEQ

Mark Warden and Charles Swanson began talking about the process to submit a recommendation to the TCEQ. Mr. Warden explained that he and Mr. Swanson wanted to streamline the process for submitting recommendations in an orderly manner.

- Example: Discussion on Health Hazard Recommendation

Valerie Miller asked if they should put the role of the IAC to remind people what IAC's role is. Charles Swanson quoted regulations establishing IAC at the start of the document. The regulations state IAC's role and purpose.

Valerie expressed interest to make it clear that IAC passes info on from industry to TCEQ.

Ms. Donna Starling spotted a grammar/sentence structure issue.

James Garvin – asked: “do topics brought up to/discussed by/reviewed by the IAC, need to be presented to the IAC by an individual rather than the council?”

Mark Warden – “if we (the IAC) get the chance to present a packet of information with evidence to back up conclusions, would it be more effective than a single person presenting it?”

Shannon Frazier – if a petition is presented by the IAC to commission, that doesn't mean commission will always adopt it.

Donna Starling makes motion to accept procedure as edited for IAC policy. Mark Warden seconded. Mr. Warden asked for comments on the document. Mr. David Moulton stated that this structure is needed. Jimmy Bergdorf agrees with David Moulton.

Charles Swanson will make edits and share the document back with the staff and council.

Topics for Future Irrigator Advisory Council meetings

Mark Warden spoke about wanting to encourage bringing new topics and ideas to future IAC meetings by the council members. Existing IAC members are recommended to bring a project idea for future IAC meetings.

- Topics can include Defining the purpose of an irrigation system;
 - In order to do outreach to homeowners
- Determining what the irrigation industry needs from the TCEQ.
 - Help/support people get licensed
 - Wanted to get in to ISD vocational programs to show that irrigation is a career path you can do as a graduating high schooler

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Irrigator Advisory Council Approved Minutes

Ms. Donna Starling mentioned they had done that with the city of Irving. Had to work it out with TCEQ to allow graduates to test before they graduate, so they can be licensed upon graduation. Ms. Starling stated her experience in this area. Expressed her interest in this idea for future discussions

Tammy Swor with Texas Irrigation Association – expressed interest in this as well. Also expressed interest in wanting to help bring people into the industry by educating homeowners about license requirements for irrigators.

Mark Warden mentioned he had helped create a program to help link homeowners with licensed irrigators.

Charles Swanson – agreed, this is a great idea. Mentioned he and a professor at Texas A&M would be teaching a landscape irrigation course that has been approved for TCEQ. – college credit course with equivalent of basic irrigator course. Advertised this course in Ag systems/ag department, in horticulture, in natural resources technical course requirement, etc.

Ms. Della Reyes with UTSA, part of SA Irrigation Association – on the customer side, what she sees most of the time is that people aren't knowledgeable on irrigation. A lot of newcomers with licenses don't continue their education, where they get more on CEUs of how they're going to troubleshoot valves. Expressed issues where people were getting the education they need as an irrigator despite the evolving nature of the industry. Expressed frustration where people are going to CEUs only for the credit, and not to expand their knowledge into technology and techniques in the industry.

Shannon Frazier concurred with Ms. Reyes, and expressed what he had seen on the water side and the LIP side. Posed this question to IAC\

James Garvin – TXIA is working on training as we speak. “when we look at training and outreach, as an NBU administrator, builders hire landscapers to install trees/landscape/etc., and then the landscaper says they can do irrigation work as well despite licensed. Builders aren't following guidelines to hire licensed individuals”

Mark Warden on James' comment – thinks this would be a good topic for future IAC meetings and initiatives.

Valerie Miller – knows IAC was working on educational videos for homeowners but has a long list of comments from this discussion that are on that video. But not seeing in agenda “comments and input from staff”.

Shannon Frazier “a lot of that is all encompassing here in this general discussion topic. With topics we are discussing, they roll right into items/wish-list we had previously.”

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Irrigator Advisory Council Approved Minutes

Tammy Swor – piggybacking on what Della Reyes said, irrigator education lacks scope and sequence. “New irrigators in business for less than 5 years have different irrigation needs than people who have been in industry for 10 years. Local municipalities are diligent in not repeating learning modules from year to year. There are some pretty hefty plans, but one is to have a bank of videos to help people troubleshoot. We really see need of a TCEQ class on rules and regs. Lot of complaints on landscapers. Lot of people going through certification programs, but not licensing programs. Some people may not ever get refresher course ever.”

Shannon Frazier – “agrees, 8 hour refresher course would be good.”

Donna Starling – “thinks we need to develop PSAs for these, but wanted to keep in mind irrigation is one of the biggest issues in domestic water conservation. We need to be ready from a conservation view to tackle this. If we cut people off or back from irrigation due to drought conditions, they won’t know they can manage their irrigation systems and still have a healthy lawn. We need to do outreach for how to best use your system. There may come a dire time within the next 80 years.”

Mark Warden “I would support that...there’s one sentence in blue book about water conservation, thinks that needs to change. Thinks we need to go in direction of conservation. Georgetown is 73% irrigated from irrigation consumption.”

Mr. Shannon Frazier suggested Mr. Mark Peterson with SAWS could assist in this.

Mark Peterson thinks this is a great opportunity to correct misinformation.

Mark Warden – “early supervisor told me ‘ideas cause meetings’, we just came up with some good ideas, we probably need to narrow down list to 2 or 3 to whittle it down. Requested list of ideas brought up so IAC could vote on before next IAC meeting.

IAC members will vote on which projects to take on during the IAC meetings.

New Business

- Address purple piping applications for Landscape Irrigation
- Shannon Frazier talked about purple pipe. Folks are requesting to use purple pipe in odd situations. Situations where they were not using reclaimed water with purple piping. Wanted to hear from council if anyone had heard of use of purple piping in situations where reclaimed water not required.
- James Garvin – what makes the difference is how the pipe is supplied. If it’s supplied with potable water, they can use potable water down the line. If OSSF, purple pipe with OSSF rules.

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Irrigator Advisory Council Approved Minutes

- Adam Smith with City of Austin – Austin requires purple piping for all non-potable water systems (rainwater, lake water, condensate). COA also encourages irrigation systems to be installed with purple pipe for future conversion and separation assurance.
- Shannon Frazier spoke on situation where individual was pumping pipe from a lake and all the piping used in the system was purple piping.
- Mr. Swanson – teaches an alternative water class focusing on different sources of water, non-potable, reclaimed rainwater, recommends use of purple pipe in class. Sites where greywater, ac condensate, industrial greywater, if you use purple components, then you know that's nothing for the home. If collecting water close to a building, we recommend components to be a safety factor. Recommend use of purple pipe in those situations, where someone later on who doesn't know what they're doing, doesn't create a cross-connection
- James Garvin spoke to any time you cross an OSSF, some irrigators don't use 10 foot rule, don't sleeve irrigation head. You have to take size of OSSF into consideration and not irrigate in those areas. Got to work with homeowner, installer, etc.
- Shannon Frazier requested James Garvin and Charles Swanson to provide a summary of what they said in the chat
- Jimmy Bergdorf – if contractor doesn't know about purple pipe, they need to speak to the cities. It's already in the rule books, but if a contractor doesn't know, they need to contact the city before they do the work.
- Kenny Smith – concurred.

2:00 **Individuals wishing to address the council**

Della Reyes asked for guide sheet on CEUS. Shannon Frazier said he will get that sheet and provide the link in the chat.

2:15 **Adjourn**

Mark warden motion to adjourn. Charles seconded.

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