

# Irrigator Advisory Council 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, August 5, 2021

Time: 9:00am

Location: Due to COVID-19, this meeting was held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

## Call to Order

Charles Swanson, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order. Other members present were Bobby Evans, David Moulton, Donna Starling, Valerie Miller, James Garvin, and Mark Peterson. Mark Warden and Jimmy Bergdorf did not attend.

TCEQ individuals in attendance were Shannon Frazier, Kenny Smith, Chelsea Atkinson, Tamara Calhoun, and Katherine McGlaughlin.

A motion to approve the May 6, 2021 Irrigator Advisory Council meeting minutes was made by Bobby Evans, second by James Garvin. All in attendance approved.

## TCEQ Program Updates:

Chelsea gave investigation update. Since the IAC meeting in May, the TCEQ has received 7 new incidents, has opened 8 investigations, and has approved 14 investigations. 27 incidents have been closed. The most common complaints received pertained to unlicensed irrigation work and advertising without a valid license.

Charles Swanson asked about the enforcement process in relation to complaints as well as where the complaints came from. Chelsea said she would get the information to Charles after the meeting.

- **Katherine McGlaughlin gave a briefing on Cross-Connection Control updates.**
  - The Cross-Connection Control program received 22 alternate form approvals. If a water system doesn't have an approved alternate form, we will be using what is posted on website.
  - The Cross-Connection Control program is preparing 2 presentations for the Water Supply Division's Public Drinking Water conference, scheduled for August 10-11, 2021.
  - The next Cross-Connection Control Subcommittee meeting will be September 2, 2021
  - The Cross-Connection Control program is in the process of scheduling 2 technical assistance surveys.

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- The Cross-Connection Control program welcomes Brian Matthews as its new leader.
- **Tamara Calhoun gave a briefing on Occupational Licensing updates.**
  - The waiver for the hands-on practical skills requirement will end on September 30, 2021. Anyone renewing license after September 30, 2021 will be required to have 8 hours of hands-on practical training to renew their license.
  - Paper exams will resume next month in all offices. However, paper exams will only be available on a quarterly basis. Region offices will not be administering staggered exams in the same month, as those exams will be administered on a staggered basis. The TCEQ will offer paper exams at special events around the state as well as at regional offices.
  - The Occupational Licensing Training Approval team made a Training document for training providers to help transition to digital remote classes. This training document was sent out Monday, August 2, 2021.
  - Ms. Calhoun informed the council that the Landscape Irrigator exam will not be available in Computer-Based Testing (CBT) format due to the design portion of the exam. Although the Irrigator Technician exam is available by CBT, the Landscape Irrigator exam remains available only by paper.
    - Landscape Irrigator exams continue to be offered by paper at TEEX.

## Education and Outreach

Kenny Smith reported that he was currently at Texas Nursery and Landscape Expo. Mr. Smith explained that the Landscape Irrigation Program has presentations in the development stage for homeowners, irrigation professionals, and developers. Mr. Smith added that he was open to suggestions regarding outreach opportunities.

## Future Topics:

Ms. Valerie Miller asked TCEQ staff for list of needs and what they need help on. Mr. Shannon Frazier informed Ms. Miller that he could not find a list of needs created by TCEQ Staff, added that Mr. Mark Warden had some questions on this topic.

Mr. Mark Peterson expressed interest in determining what preparation actions are being recommended to irrigators, and what possible responses irrigators are considering, to prepare for severe weather events. Mr. James Garvin responded that irrigators need to reach out to homeowners about severe events, particularly with regards to winterization due to backflow prevention assemblies placed above ground. Mr. Charles Swanson suggested that irrigators prepare documentation and include a severe weather preparation document in maintenance checklist.

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A member of the public noted that the IAC created videos on [winterizing](#) irrigation systems and [turning systems back on in the spring](#). The public member noted that the videos were created in conjunction with Take Care of Texas, and that the IAC was going to work on other videos for public education of homeowners.

Mr. Swanson requested that the IAC review inspector checklists to see if any changes are needed to the forms to ensure water conservation.

## Votes for new projects:

Mr. Swanson suggested the Council table the vote for new projects until next IAC meeting. The Council agreed to table the vote for new projects until the November IAC meeting.

## New Business

- *Mr. Frazier expressed that the LIP has received questions and customers complaining about municipalities requiring irrigation inspectors to maintain dual licenses (both a landscape irrigator license and an irrigation inspector license). Mr. Frazier asked if this was a common occurrence.*
  - *Mr. James Garvin informed the council that some municipalities require dual licenses to do inspections and added that city codes are written that way in order to do commercial irrigation inspections. Have to adhere to what city requires to work in that city.*
  - *Mr. Swanson commented that the TCEQ had previously discussed this topic, and that an affidavit was made to address this issue. Mr. David Moulton added that the City of Mansfield required dual licenses, but also required the completed affidavit asserting that only one is in use.*
  - *Mr. Swanson asked how many cities use plumbing inspectors instead of irrigation inspectors. Mr. Frazier stated the TCEQ does not collect that information. Mr. David Moulton suggested the TCEQ run a survey to look into this issue. Mr. Frazier suggested he could look at getting with the water supply division for getting this info in a 2-question survey.*
  
- *Mr. Kenny Smith expressed the LIP had a couple people call in about the length requirements for swing joints.*
  - *Mr. Swanson stated the TCEQ rules don't require swing joints. Mr. Smith asked why municipalities would have a rule on length requirements for swing joints.*
  - *Mr. Garvin stated that all major cities require a flexible pipe joint between head and PVC connection to allow for give if it gets stepped on/ran over.*

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- A member of the public stated that the issue may arise because of hydraulics when pipe length is added to reach a sprinkler head.

## Individuals wishing to address the council

John DeCell posted links to the videos on [winterizing](#) irrigation systems and [turning systems back on in the spring](#) in chatroom. Wanted to talk about council creating videos. Suggested council relook at topics for creating public awareness videos on TCOT. Mr. DeCell also mentioned that he has the original inspection checklists that he can provide if the IAC decides to revise the checklists.

Mr. David Moulton asked if the next IAC meeting would be in digital format or in person. Mr. Shannon Frazier stated that the IAC will continue to meet virtually until the TCEQ received approval to have in-person meetings.

Ms. Donna Starling requested an overview of what all is provided and what all the LIP can do for outreach/education. Ms. Starling requested the scope as well. Mr. Smith stated that he hoped to have presentations done in 6 months. Mr. Smith stated that the LIP was looking for any type of expos/events promoting water conservation. Ms. Starling asked if the TCEQ could send materials to a small or local event for local event handlers to distribute. Mr. Frazier stated that the LIP can do that once cleared by the Commission to go to more events.

Mr. Garvin discussed that the available sites for irrigation tests were in only 5 locations, and that the locations don't cover entire state. Mr. Garvin thinks IAC should assist local guys and see if TEEX could help.

## Motion to adjourn

James Garvin motioned to adjourn, seconded by David Moulton. All in favor.

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