



State of New Jersey

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
DIVISION OF WATER SUPPLY & GEOSCIENCE

SHAWN M. LATOURETTE
Commissioner

SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

Water System Operations Element
Bureau of Water System Engineering
401 East State Street
P.O. Box 402, Mail Code 401-04Q
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0420
Tel. (609) 292-2957 ♦ Fax (609) 633-1495
www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
Licensed Operator Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes for February 23, 2022
Meeting held via Microsoft Teams

Approved by the Committee on May 25, 2022

Committee Members Present: Kristin Tedesco, Joe Bonaccorso, William Mitchell, Patricia Gardner, Keith Vaughn, Richard Eustace, Pam Carolan, Jill Plesnarski, Ronald Suto, Carol Broccoli, Robert Fullagar

There were 12 committee members present, constituting a quorum.

Committee Members Absent: Eugene Chebra

Committee Legal Representatives Present: DAG Stephanie Carney, NJ Division of Law

NJDEP Staff Present: Patricia Ingelido, Joseph duRocher, Malathi Prabhu, Casey Lippincott, Tyler Rowe, Matthew Lipnick

Members of the Public Present: Cliff Keen, David Leister, Donna Domico, Keith Smith, Lisa Oberreiter, Michael Furrey, Michael Ostrom, Paul Britt, Rick Howlett, Tom Quillinan, Roger Budd, Ken Koches, Paul Schorr, Robert Noel

1. Call to Order

K. Tedesco presided over the telephonic meeting and called the meeting to order at 10:08 am, noting there were enough committee members present to constitute a quorum.

K. Tedesco read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement (OPMA).

This meeting was held virtually through Microsoft Teams, with the option to call-in due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Notice of the meeting and instructions on how to participate by phone were provided by public notice in advance of the meeting.

2. Approval of the minutes from the November 2021 Meeting

Motion: J. Bonaccorso called a motion to accept the minutes as presented. P. Carolan seconded. J. Bonaccorso asked if there are any observations or corrections. Hearing none, all in favor; none opposed.

3. Membership Updates

Reorganization of Officers

K. Tedesco moved to take nominations for the Chair and asked for nominations:

R. Eustace called a motion to nominate Joe Bonaccorso; W. Mitchell seconded. Hearing no objections, the motion passed unanimously.

K. Tedesco asked if there are any other nominations, hearing none. All were in favor, none opposed.

J. Bonaccorso thanks all for the re-nomination and re-appointment. He entertains the nomination of vice chair for instructors. J. Bonaccorso nominated Jill Plesnarski; R. Eustace seconded. J. Bonaccorso asked for any other nominations, hearing none. All were in favor, none opposed.

J. Bonaccorso accepts nominations for vice chair for operators. R. Eustace called a motion to nominate Ron Suto; P. Gardner seconded. Hearing no objections, the motion passed unanimously. All were in favor, none opposed.

Vacancy Appointment Status

K. Tedesco stated that DEP has been working on addressing the vacancies, and that a goal before the May meeting is to look at the remaining vacancies. K. Tedesco stated that the focus was first on ensuring there was a quorum for meetings. There were some vacancies that did not have nominees in place, and someone had stated at the last meeting that there were others, and if there were to let her know since in the transition, they had acted on the information they had.

J. Bonaccorso stated that he was familiar with the nominations from New Jersey Water Environment Association, and asked K. Tedesco if she can confirm if she has those nominations. K. Tedesco does not believe she has those and asked whom they were forwarded to. J. Bonaccorso stated that they were recently sent to her office sometime in November, but he will reach out to the staff that sent them and have them re-send to K. Tedesco. K. Tedesco will follow up.

4. Program/NJDEP Updates

K. Tedesco stated that the board has a separate page for meeting minutes, and something that is being worked on now is having a separate page for the advisory committee. One general thing being discussed is looking internally at the approval process and bylaws, to make sure we are following statutes. K. Tedesco mentioned to committee members that she is trying to find a better way to share information before the meetings, proposing a possible shared drive for files. Separately she stated there is a potential for sub-committees over the next couple of months to tackle issues we have discussed – virtual courses, online course, training on-demand, and criteria

that would need to be met. K. Tedesco stated that if there was anyone who was interested in participating in a sub-committee to let herself and Joe know by email.

P. Carolan asked if there was a list of the sub-committees somewhere. J. Bonaccorso answered – there is only one for people to review courses between meetings for a faster approval process, that is the only committee that has been active for the past few years and any other is temporary.

K. Tedesco stated that NJDEP will take suggestions for other things to look at. As mentioned, they are trying to put together a schedule for the Licensed Operator rules, looking into pass/fail rates for exams, and study materials. K. Tedesco states there are a lot of suggestions, and they need to think of what their top items to prioritize this year.

P. Carolan stated that she heard the mention of a committee for online courses and didn't know if anything had been established.

5. Course Approvals

J. Bonaccorso stated it is time for course approvals and thinks it is appropriate in the future to have the vice chair and one person from the NJDEP to do an initial review and that he was usually copied on this. J. Bonaccorso asked if K. Tedesco was ready to review.

K. Tedesco asked if he or either of the vice chairs used to review. J. Bonaccorso responded that he did not receive the school or instructor approvals and that generally Chris Hoffman would do the initial review and send to Jill so they could be presented at the meeting. He believed that W. Mitchell was involved as well.

J. Bonaccorso called on R. Fullager to ask his question. R. Fullager asked if there were criteria to look at for the approval of courses. J. Bonaccorso responded saying yes, there is a checklist for course providers, and it is on the web page. The criteria are in the bylaws, and there is a form for the approval process.

School & Instructor Approvals

J. Bonaccorso started with Atlantic Cape Community College's request for approval of the intro course and the advanced collections course, stating that the information looks appropriate. J. Bonaccorso continued saying Mercer County's request for approval of the advanced water course also looks appropriate, as well as Bergen County's request for approval of the intro course, however they did not submit a form. Bergen County did not send a complete application, we should send them the standard form – J. Bonaccorso asked if anyone else noticed.

P. Gardner noticed that Atlantic Cape Community College did not complete the full application package and asked if it was because they were a renewal do they view them differently. J. Bonaccorso stated that Atlantic has the course approval form and resumes. P. Gardner continued saying she didn't know if they needed the syllabus and agenda. J. Bonaccorso states that the form says they will meet the required course curriculum and mandatory textbooks, so they do not

necessarily have to send their outline. P. Gardener asked if that was only for the intro and advanced courses or if it was for any TCH as well. J. Bonaccorso responded saying right now we are only considering the required courses and that what he sees from ACCC we can accept as presented.

W. Mitchell had a question; he was going through the bylaws and there is a distinct difference between the advanced course and intro courses. The intro course states that you can have a license in any category, but the advanced class states that you must have a level 4 license in the topic being taught. The way he views this is that if you are teaching advanced water operations, you need to have a T4 and a W4. J. Bonaccorso stated that it can be either one (T4 or W4). W. Mitchell stated that is not how it is written. J. Bonaccorso stated he understands and asked which resume he was concerned with. W. Mitchell looked at Atlantic County's instructor resume and saw a T4, W2, S1, and C3. P. Gardner asked if he was referring to the advanced collections course. J. Bonaccorso stated that Atlantic County is asking for intro to water and wastewater, and advanced collections. W. Mitchell asked then for the advanced collections course they would need a C4, and I don't see that, and alternatively an S4 would be needed – they do not have that either. J. Bonaccorso asked if he was referring to Emmett. W. Mitchell stated that Emmett has an S4, and his problem is resolved.

P. Gardner needed clarification for the advanced collections course – asking if the board established curriculum for that course and you do not need to submit. J. Bonaccorso answered saying there are course curriculums that were approved for the intro water/wastewater, advanced water/wastewater, advanced collection system, and the industrial. There are also textbooks and other requirements listed on the website.

J. Bonaccorso asked if everyone was okay with Atlantic County. No response – moving forward.

J. Bonaccorso continued with the continuing education from Bergen Tech, he stated that he saw the schedule but there was no NJDEP form - K. Tedesco agreed. J. Bonaccorso stated that they will be on hold pending their correction on the form, and it is not required to come back to the Committee for that. It can go to the Executive Committee between regular Committee meetings.

W. Mitchell had a question on continuing education from Bergen – asking if they are also doing advanced water. J. Bonaccorso refers him to the letter, saying the request is just for intro to water and wastewater. W. Mitchell added another comment asking how important is it that they are following the course curriculum. J. Bonaccorso responds saying that schools usually do, and if we receive a complaint then we have to contact the institution and tell them they are not following the curriculum. There have been times where schools did not follow the curriculum and they were threatened with losing their course certification. That would typically be considered a failure on the part of the instructor, not the institution.

J. Bonaccorso continued saying the next is Mercer County Community College and they were asking for advanced water with Andrew Pappachen as the instructor. Andrew has previously been an instructor and has the required licenses, so we can put them on the OK list if no one has any questions. W. Mitchell asked if a typed signature qualifies as a signature. J. Bonaccorso answered yes, it does count, and it is easier to process/exchange the forms that way. W. Mitchell asked if we

previously got the course outlines, forms, etc. J. Bonaccorso answered yes, they are providing us with our form. P. Gardner noted that this is the one where they put 40% participation and changed it to 30%, but with a closer look they range from 10%-30%. That is something where we might want the sub-committee to look at, if it's okay to have that wide of a range. J. Bonaccorso agreed, and said that is usually a school policy, not a committee policy. They need to come up with a balance and would like to have the Rutgers staff to provide guidance since they have a wide range of adult education courses. J. Bonaccorso asked the theoretical – when does a person fail a course for attendance? J. Plesnarski stated that they use the 10% rule, taking into consideration if there were work related excuses, or pandemic related excuses, otherwise they are losing too much material. (Rutgers agreed in the chat). J. Bonaccorso agreed, as long as it is documented. J. Bonaccorso asked if everyone was okay with Mercer County.

J. Bonaccorso moved on to Rutgers since everyone has questions with NJIT. C. Broccoli stated that she must re-do the form for the instructor. J. Bonaccorso asked who is the instructor that she is referring to. C. Broccoli stated now it is Rob Genetelli and Nick Fabbricatore. J. Bonaccorso stated that the form is there, and it was originally presented by a different instructor, so given the information we have does anyone have any problems with Rutgers? There were no objections.

J. Bonaccorso asked the committee to look at NJIT. Our concern was that NJIT was offering an externship program and they were trying to present it as allowing this to take the place of 1-year operational experience hours, and then sit for the exam. J. Bonaccorso continued saying he didn't believe we can adopt this as a policy and doesn't know how we should act on it. W. Mitchell added that he wanted to re-hash the conversation with Chris Hoffman when he was still on the committee. Some of the discussions that were held regarded people sitting for exams that worked for a small municipality that did water and wastewater collection. The statement was that if you spent 25% of your day doing water, 25% doing distribution, 25% doing sewer, and 25% doing collections; that someone would need to work 4 years in order to get 1 year of experience in one specific category. Now we are looking at a class that will have someone work 1 hour a day/couple hours a week, how do you equate that to 1 years' worth of work? J. Bonaccorso responded saying that was the original objection to this application, there is no problem with the course, but we cannot accept it as taking the place of experience which is required in the regulations. W. Mitchell indicated that M. Furrey had his hand raised, asking permission to speak.

J. Bonaccorso asked if M. Furrey was on. M. Furrey stated that since he did the application, he wanted to clarify that the externship was not meant to be a substitute for operating experience and didn't know where the confusion was. He continued saying the externship was in lieu of some of the hours for the advanced class, they have an externship program where students can apply and have the opportunity to work for these systems. M. Furrey stated the course length for a semester is 64 hours, and the course requires 90 hours, the remaining hours must come from somewhere and wanted to clarify that those were his intentions – the externship was in lieu of the required hours for the course. J. Bonaccorso replied saying the way it is stated in the letter it says, "in lieu of classroom hours". J. Bonaccorso suggested rewording it to "in addition to classroom hours, in order to accumulate the required 90 hours". M. Furrey stated that was the intent. J. Bonaccorso said that

is not how it is written. This sounds like a really good program, but the requirement is for 90 classroom hours. M. Furrey stated that the course for the semester is 64 hours. J. Bonaccorso asked if he intended to do the additional 26 hours as hands-on experience. M. Furrey answered, yes, and that is what they consider externship – and at NJIT the way it works is they have to do 3 hours and they get 1 credit hour. J. Bonaccorso stated he understood, and that was college credit hours, not actual hours. M. Furrey stated he tried to make it as clear as possible. J. Bonaccorso asked if M. Furrey could re-word #3 to have it in addition to the required classroom hours because you want to get to 90, do you understand? M. Furrey answered yes. J. Bonaccorso continued saying if you want to supplement the 64 with 26 hours of externship to be able to accumulate 90 hours – I don't think anyone would have an objection. M. Furrey stated he would try to re-write it and resubmit it and asked if it would have to go through another meeting. J. Bonaccorso stated he wanted to get a sense from the committee, and asked if the course description states that there are 64 hours of classroom instruction and 26 hours of hands-on experience in addition to the classroom hours, that we could accept the course? W. Mitchell stated he did not have any comments.

P. Gardner brought M. Furrey's attention to the purpose, stating that the last sentence is worded to seem like you are getting real world experience, this wording maybe needs to be fixed as well. P. Gardner continued stating that this is an advanced course, and the board already has criteria established, is there a need-to-know for this externship? (Asking the board). How do we evaluate, even with the topics of the course, whether it is clear or not that everything will be covered in the NJIT course? J. Bonaccorso agreed, stating we may ask to indicate on our form that coverage is what is required on NJDEP's syllabus. M. Furrey replied saying he thinks he submitted the form. J. Bonaccorso answered that he didn't see it. M. Furrey stated he did not know about the form. J. Bonaccorso answered stating that he taught courses before with his name on the form. He continued, asking K. Tedesco if she could send anything to the committee and include W. Mitchell. J. Bonaccorso stated they will put that on hold, and the rest can be done by email if everything is addressed, he asked if that was reasonable. Everyone agreed.

J. Bonaccorso asked if that was it for the required courses. K. Tedesco confirmed. J. Bonaccorso moved on to the TCH courses.

TCH Course Providers

J. Bonaccorso continued saying AWWA does not need individual action since they were already approved as a provider and asked if everyone understood. Everyone agrees. K. Tedesco addressed W. Mitchell and asked if the provider was just NJAWWA or AWWA national. W. Mitchell answered saying it is meant to be NJAWWA, but we sometimes sponsor classes. He continued saying that once the committee takes sponsorship of it then the education committee are responsible to look at the required TCHs.

J. Bonaccorso moved on to CEUnion, saying that they do not have program approval, but they are a virtual course provider who has received approval for some individual courses in the past. He noted that DCA's Division of Local Government Services has approved this course (SWOT Analysis) for

continuing education credit, and asked what everyone thought of accepting this course, and we have to decide if it is water, wastewater, both, or a safety course. J. Bonaccorso is under the impression that it is a management course so that is applicable to water and wastewater – addresses number of issues in the S3 and S4 classes. J. Bonaccorso asked if anyone had a problem with CEUnion. P. Carolan responded that she thinks it is applicable to both because it incorporates the handling of both situations. J. Bonaccorso noted that they did not provide us with our form in getting the course approved – this application is not complete, but it could be accepted pending the receipt of the appropriate application form. He asked if anyone had any other observations. No response. J. Bonaccorso ended saying to put them on the OK list.

School & Instructor Approvals (cont.)

- **Motion:** J. Bonaccorso requested to act on all required courses (not TCHs) first - ACCC, Mercer, and Rutgers are all clear, and asked for someone to call a motion to accept these as presented. R. Eustace called a motion, J. Plesnarski seconded. All in favor – none opposed.

C. Broccoli initially abstained, but J. Bonaccorso said she did not have to because it did not involve money.

P. Carolan abstained because packages were delivered yesterday afternoon and she did not have time to review.

J. Bonaccorso continued, saying they agreed to receive from M. Furrey and NJIT clarification of intent and design of the course, and the acceptance of the syllabus provided by the NJDEP – this is on hold. Bergen has to be informed they need to complete their application, he asked to act on this on principle, on the arrival of the application form.

- **Motion:** J. Bonaccorso called a motion. R. Suto seconded. All in favor – none opposed. (P. Carolan abstained).

TCH Course Providers (cont.)

CEUnion needs to complete an application.

Eastcom Associates' TCH request (Fundamentals of Underground Utility Locating) provided their application, syllabus, and form, and indicate that the course is for water, wastewater, and safety. W. Mitchell stated there is a mistake and that safety shouldn't be there. J. Bonaccorso stated that this is just water and wastewater.

J. Bonaccorso moved to EPA saying we normally accept any courses they provide. In the past we didn't give a course number because they give out certificates that attendees send to the department for confirmation. K. Tedesco wanted to clarify that how it works is they take the class, get a certificate, and send that certificate to the Department. J. Bonaccorso responded – that is correct.

J. Bonaccorso stated that next was J.A. Montgomery, a municipal excess liability organization that has given courses for years. J.A. Montgomery usually does safety, but these are for management (2022 MEL & MRHIF Educational Seminar – 2-day Live Virtual Program). W. Mitchell noted that one section was listed as “safety”. C. Broccoli added that there was also a section on the Affordable Care Act. J. Bonaccorso replied that that is a management thing, and managers should be aware of that. The Hobbs Act doesn’t really involve them, but they are dealing with local government ethics. P. Gardner stated that she isn’t sure it is applicable for the second two (ethics and cyber-attacks) and asked if that would be for officials not licensed operators. J. Bonaccorso noted that it could apply for a manager of a facility, but overall, it is management-related. He continued saying it would be easier to approve the whole thing on the 29th, not May 6th because it is entirely different. J. Bonaccorso asked if anyone had a problem with approving the 2.5 hours for day 1 and nothing for day 2.

Motion: R. Eustace called a motion that they approve day 1 and not day 2 since day 2 does not have any curriculum regarding water wastewater management. P. Gardner seconded. All in favor – none opposed.

Jacobs from Utah sent a request for accreditation for a level 1 operator course that is 18-20 hours. W. Mitchell stated he glanced at the level 1 and level 2, and it is a little misleading; it implies that operators can take this and have the required classwork to sit for the exam but, it is fairly in-depth for TCHs. W. Mitchell worried that operators would use this to bypass things, but if it is just TCHs then it looks like a fantastic program. P. Gardner asked how many TCHs they would receive, one side says 2 CEUs for 24 modules and 18 hours, and the next letter says 16 TCHs. J. Bonaccorso answered, saying 1 CEU is equivalent to 10 contact hours. Based on their observation they are asking for 18-20 hours, J. Bonaccorso felt safer approving 18 hours. W. Mitchell agreed, saying to contact them to clarify in their letter how many hours the training will be and how many hours they are requesting. J. Bonaccorso agreed, they are accepting Jacob’s level 1 and asking them to resubmit their application for 18 hours. C. Broccoli stated that since it says “self-paced” they are trying to cover both aspects. W. Mitchell asked how they are qualifying that someone is there, it is kind of scary if an operator turns this program on and then goes and does something else, they would have all the TCHs but didn’t participate for any of them. W. Mitchell continues saying we should go back and have them clarify how many hours and TCHs they are requesting and ask if there is a mechanism in place that ensures full attendance. J. Bonaccorso responded that they will be putting it on hold for modification, and the next one is the same thing but level 2. They are doing 13-16 hours and asking for 16; they need to re-submit and clarify. W. Mitchell agreed.

P. Gardner stated there is another request under Jacobs – Merchantville Pennsauken (MPWC) (Bloodborne Pathogens, Confined Space Entry, and Silica Industrial Safety). J. Bonaccorso apologized for missing it – lesson plan was there. P. Gardner asked if there were any special requirements for the safety course that instructors need for confined space. J. Bonaccorso answered that certain courses require certifications from national organizations like the American Heart Association, that would be for CPR training, AED training, etc. If they are certified by those associations, we would find it acceptable. J. Bonaccorso continued stating that it is only a safety

course that can be for water and wastewater. P. Gardner asked if they need to send in a resume for the instructor. J. Bonaccorso answered that for those it is not necessary. P. Carolan added that it looks like they only applied for safety and water, but she agrees that it should be for water and wastewater. J. Bonaccorso stated that the terminology is that everything that is non-management or technical is just safety, because only 1/3 of required credits is allowed for safety – so in this case it is only safety not just water and safety. W. Mitchell added that this applied to all three, and if we do approve, they should be notified that it is only safety. J. Bonaccorso stated that when the course approval number is given – a number ending in 31 signifies that the course is for safety. J. Bonaccorso asked if that was okay for everyone, and that there are three courses: bloodborne pathogens, confined space entry, and silica industrial safety.

RCAP Solutions – Basic Chemistry for Water and Wastewater Operators. K. Tedesco added that she believed for RCAP they have been approved before. J. Bonaccorso stated that all that was needed from them is the form that indicates number of hours requested. J. Plesnarski noted that it was the fourth document down labeled under basic chem. J. Bonaccorso replied thank you, they are requesting 4 TCHs, that is reasonable – RCAP is okay. J. Plesnarski stated that when looking at the training agenda she noticed it is from 8-12 with a half hour break (for RCAP) so this would have to be amended for 3.5 TCHs not 4. J. Bonaccorso agreed, asking if everyone is okay with giving them 3.5. J. Plesnarski agreed. J. Bonaccorso continued; we will mark it down to 3.5 and explain we are reducing the time to account for the break.

J. Bonaccorso moved on to Environmental Finance Center Network (EFCN), they are asking for 1.5 hours related to water for a webinar entitled “Building Resilience and Planning for an Uncertain Future”. J. Bonaccorso continued saying he was putting this course down as okay for water and wastewater and it is for 1.5 hours.

J. Bonaccorso moved on to the Western States Alliance TCH request (The National FOG Abatement Technical Assistance and Training Program: Helping Small Communities Address Common Maintenance and Management Challenges); this would be for wastewater for 8 hours, and this is also virtual. He continued; there are four 2-hour sessions online for a total of 8 hours, they have an outline on how they monitor attendance – is everyone okay with that?

NJDEP course (PFAS Summit). K. Tedesco stated that this was Department given, it isn’t done often but it was held in January, and it was recorded and had registration available showing who was on the call and for how long. J. Bonaccorso stated that since it is not done all the time, we can fill out a form so it can be assigned a slot. He continued saying he didn’t have a problem with the topics, they are current, it doesn’t need approval, but it does need some type of recognition just like EPA. J. Plesnarski stated that it should have a cover sheet for record keeping. K. Tedesco confirmed she understood.

J. Bonaccorso moved on to next course request from RCAP Solutions (GIS for Small Water Utilities); 2 hours works, he asked if everyone was okay with that. J. Plesnarski answered yes.

J. Bonaccorso wrapped up this part of the agenda by stating that based upon what was just discussed; CEUnion needs to send an application, Eastcom: 6 hours decided for that, J.A. Montgomery: day 1 is okay but not day 2, Jacobs' request is being placed on hold to resubmit to clarify hours, MPWC safety was accepted, first RCAP needs to be refined to 3.5 hours, EFCN is okay for 1.5, Western States Alliance is okay for 8, and RCAP's second request (GIS course) is okay for 2. He asked if everyone agreed. (Yes)

- **Motion:** J. Bonaccorso called a motion to approve pending the outstanding resolutions of the items on the list. P. Gardner motioned. W. Mitchell seconded. All in favor – none opposed.

6. New Business

3 Time Failure Course Options

K. Tedesco stated she put this on the agenda because they are starting to offer examinations more frequently because of the online option, and people asked what they can take if the in-person course wasn't offered immediately. K. Tedesco continued, asking if we want to establish other options for 3-time failure, or think about ways to offer the review course at other times of the year, this does not have to be determined today it just came up a few times. J. Bonaccorso added that there are some in-person courses given that will continue to be given, some courses done once a year – and that's okay. J. Bonaccorso continued; when it has happened, that people do not want to wait, I look at the exam they are looking to take for the fourth time and tell them it is acceptable to take a related correspondence course at Sacramento. What was originally intended is that they re-take the course, and that is when we came up with this option to take another review course instead. J. Bonaccorso continued; if the time between the available courses is so long, for example – 3-time failure on advanced water, we pick out a water course that would force them to review a lot of the water information, and that seemed to be acceptable at the time. J. Bonaccorso asked if the Board would be willing to revisit that, stating he would agree with this, if the student wants to do it there is an incentive that they want the license and they will take the exam again – this is the way it was done in the past. To J. Bonaccorso there is no knowledge of a full-length online required course yet, Sacramento may be doing it eventually.

P. Carolan agreed, stating that if they are willing to do that, we should accept the Sacramento course. P. Carolan asked if anyone has looked at why people may be failing and if there is something we can change in the course to help them. She continued, speaking for our operators (Mt. Laurel) – there is a different logic for those who have gone to college and know how to study better. P. Carolan noted that this is something they are working on and asked if they had the authority to change up the curriculum of the advanced course, since we want people to pass. J. Bonaccorso stated that unfortunately some people do not know how to study or are just not studying for the exams. P. Carolan stated that as an employer they pay for their employees' exams and classes, and when they don't pass that causes issues – they are not putting their own time into it. J. Bonaccorso stated that studying must be involved outside of the classroom and that Chris Hoffman used to evaluate classes. There have been times where students say that the instructor

did not relay information, and we investigated that. Information may be provided on why they are not passing, but some of the students may not be exceeding because the instructor is just having a book reading session and not educating. J. Bonaccorso stated that in the past they have not gotten involved, but it always boils down to if the student is willing to study.

K. Tedesco stated that one thing the Department has discussed with the Board and testing provider is to get reports to show which sections they are struggling on. She continued saying they are trying to work on getting that data to better the course – they shared with the Board the pass/fail rates recently for the past year just to see where the gaps might be. J. Bonaccorso stated that they would like to see the pass/fail rates since they have not seen them in a while. K. Tedesco stated she would share.

P. Gardner stated that she is on the Board, and this is something that they talked about; having joint committee meetings to go over these. The courses should be evaluated every few years since things change. P. Gardner added she wants to work together to come up with a more robust review and approval process and reapply every few years. She continued; we need to make sure education is at a quality level – we are interested in looking into this since we have never seen such high failure rates consistently and it should be looked at.

Financial Status of the Training Fund

J. Bonaccorso stated the next item is the Eligible Training Costs and Projects (ETCP) fund and asked how much we received. This fund was established by Statue and delegated local agencies for industrial pre-treatment programs, when they fine a facility, 10% of that fine should go towards funding operator training using it to off-set the cost of training programs. J. Bonaccorso continued; this is done to make the Training Contact Hours more affordable; if the employer refuses to compensate an applicant the operator can apply to be reimbursed. J. Bonaccorso asked K. Tedesco if she knows the balance of that fund. K. Tedesco answered that she did not but she knows some invoices were paid out so she will look into it.

Sacramento State Online Course Changes

K. Tedesco stated that they have been getting several emails that the introductory wastewater course is no longer available at Sacramento State, and staff was looking at this to see if there were any impacts – but it is just something to be aware of.

7. 2022 Meeting Schedule

J. Bonaccorso asked K. Tedesco if she had worked out the 2022 meeting schedule. K. Tedesco answered yes, saying we will be holding quarterly meetings. J. Bonaccorso asked if K. Tedesco could send out the schedule so they could put them in their calendars. K. Tedesco answered yes, if there were any issues the meetings could always be changed – she will send out the invites with the pass/fail rates.

8. Board Update

J. Bonaccorso asked for a Board update. K. Tedesco first stated, we offer remotely proctored online exams, and they are currently working on offering alternate options, that would include going to testing centers. There were complaints from multiple people about firewalls at their place of employment, etc. and it impacted their ability to test. K. Tedesco continued; that is expected to be available around July, what we asked the Board members is there are any problems with remote testing, that we have a log of complaints, and we are working with those individuals with problems. They cannot offer this to everyone due to contractual things. The second aspect of the Board update is that they have caught up on the backlog of applications minus a handful. K. Tedesco stated that the Board is planning to put together a subcommittee to resolve outstanding applications with questions or issues that have been raised. This will not be a large group, but they are trying to put it together as soon as possible.

J. Bonaccorso thanked K. Tedesco and asked if there were any other items for the Licensing Board.

9. Public Comment

J. Bonaccorso moved on, asking if anyone had a public comment limited to 3 minutes.

L. Oberreiter had two questions; she appreciated the in-person testing options and asked if it will continue to be an additional 70-80 dollars for the exam, because currently there is an application fee as well as an additional fee. K. Tedesco answered yes that these additional fees are for the enhanced testing capabilities, this is something that is discussed with the Board, but it is expected to continue. L. Oberreiter thanked K. Tedesco and asked if an operator fails an exam, would they be able to view their exam and learn from previous mistakes. K. Tedesco answered that it is her understanding that they are not able to view their test through PSI, because the company does not offer it. J. Bonaccorso added that this used to be offered, and it is no longer offered through ABC because they closely guard the contents of the questions. J. Bonaccorso encourages that if there is a problem with a question's wording or the answers provided, there is an opportunity to complain on the test. If the operator cannot find that opportunity, they should contact himself or K. Tedesco to describe why they feel it was not appropriate. J. Bonaccorso explained that in the past they have been successful at getting those questions reversed, and the tests modified. The other issue on exams is the amount of time provided to do the exam; in addition, there have been 10 additional proposed questions that are used to evaluate if they are usable in the future. J. Bonaccorso stated that now tests are 110 questions, not 100 questions, and examinees do not know which ones are for credit and which ones are to evaluate for future use. This makes the amount of time for test completion shorter; they have asked for an opportunity to extend the test time – they will keep asking. L. Oberreiter stated she agreed with asking for more time since they get much less time per question (with the 10 extra questions added), and they may take a while on a question that isn't even credited.

M. Ostrom was called on to ask his question. He stated that K. Tedesco answered his question, he had a problem with taking the test stating that he took the test and now he is not allowed. M. Ostrom asked about the subcommittee that was going to be put together. K. Tedesco answered yes,

they are resolving these issues in March. M. Ostrom stated that this comes down to his livelihood, this is important for him to further his career. J. Bonaccorso ensured that the Committee has an interest in this as well. M. Ostrom asked if he could be informed when this is happening. K. Tedesco answered yes.

C. Keen introduced himself, and stated he has been having difficulties hiring people, and thinks some of the issues are in the examinations. He liked that someone had mentioned that the goal is for everyone to pass the exam because a lot of operators take the course and do not feel this way and wanted to make some suggestions based on his experience. C. Keen proposed forming a group of course teachers to coordinate with each other. C. Keen then brought up that in the intro class there is a 180-hour course where people who may not touch wastewater treatment sit for training, and the same goes for water treatment – if there was a way to break up the courses somehow it would be an incentive for people to take the intro courses. C. Keen also stated that with his bachelor's degree and 3 licenses he cannot teach an advanced course because he does not have a master's degree, he feels there are a lot of people who could teach these courses but are not considered qualified. Overall, he feels if there was more opportunities and more instructors there would in turn be more operators. C. Keen felt that the regulations (7:10A) needed to be updated and thanked the committee. J. Bonaccorso answered, saying at the annual NJWEA conference there is a session for any instructors to come and exchange ideas, as for the other issues he heartily agreed.

P. Schorr thanked K. Tedesco for addressing his comment in the chat and asked if there was an audio recording of the meeting. He also asked if the attorney could clarify if there was a conflict of interest if the Assistant Commissioner is also a chair on the Board. J. Bonaccorso thanked P. Schorr.

R. Suto asked, when it comes to filling out the applications, there have been a lot of people sitting for a 2,3, or 4 that already have a 1 and 2, that are having issues with the NJDEP since they must continually provide their High School diploma. J. Bonaccorso responded that this had been resolved years ago. R. Suto disagreed, saying that these issues were happening recently, they were told by the NJDEP that they must submit it every time – if they already have a license why do they have to continually supply this? J. Bonaccorso appointed K. Tedesco to answer. K. Tedesco responded saying she can only speak on what they are trying to do which is standardizing the process of the applications, they will look into this, but a lot of this work is to make it a more standard process for consistency.

10. Adjournment

W. Mitchell called a motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 12:13 PM . R. Suto seconded. The motion passed unanimously.