



State of New Jersey

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New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

Licensed Operator Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes for May 25, 2022

Meeting held via Microsoft Teams

Approved by the Committee on August 10, 2022

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

There were 9 committee members present, constituting a quorum.

Committee Members Absent: Jill Plesnarski

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

NJDEP Staff Present: Kristin Tedesco, Tyler Rowe, Keith Vaughn, Patricia Ingelido

Members of the Public Present: Lisa Oberreiter, Paul Schorr

1. Call to Order

J. Bonaccorso presided over the telephonic meeting and called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m., noting there were enough committee members present to constitute a quorum.

S. Carney read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement (OPMA).

This meeting was held via conference call 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 February 23, 2022 meeting

J. Bonaccorso noted that the meeting notes were included in the Advisory Committee Shared Drive and asked if there were any comments. Hearing none, he entertained a motion to accept the previous

meeting minutes as presented. R. Suto motioned to accept the meeting minutes and P. Carolan seconded. Hearing no objections, the motion passed unanimously, and the minutes were adopted.

3. Program/NJDEP Updates

- *PSI/ABC Testing Updates*

K. Tedesco initiated the Program and NJDEP updates by stating the Department has been in communication with ABC about offering proctored exams in testing centers. The availability of the testing centers is still being discussed, but ABC is on track to roll out that method of testing in the third quarter of 2022.

K. Tedesco stated NJDEP is also looking into available options for applicants that experienced technical issues.

J. Bonaccorso added that NJDEP should register concern with ABC regarding the examination proctors and their knowledge for what is permitted during the tests. Provided feedback from applicants about being denied access to formula pages during the exam and the mandatory security measures taking up a significant amount of available testing time. Requested NJDEP meet with ABC to discuss issues.

R. Eustace added that he was informed of another issue relating to the process of verifying the applicant's driver license, which could take up fifteen (15) minutes to verify.

K. Tedesco responded by stating that NJDEP has been routinely meeting with ABC and stressing issues that have been reported to the Department and has also been encouraging exam applicants to express any concerns with the process they may have. Noticed that complaints seem to have gone down but is unsure if that is caused by a lack of issues or just a lack of reporting those issues.

K. Tedesco encouraged anyone with a complaint to send an email to WWW@dep.nj.gov so it can be logged and to have a more accurate representation of issues.

R. Eustace asked if that email address can be added to some correspondence, so applicants know where to send their complaints. K. Tedesco agreed and that she will look into where it can be added.

J. Bonaccorso stated another complaint was the amount of time for the ten (10) extra questions from ABC.

K. Tedesco responded with a recent discussion involving the Board of Examiners, stating that members can review questions and have expressed interest in using that to look at outdated questions.

J. Bonaccorso clarified that the issue is that applicants are given three (3) hours for the exam, and because the extra questions on the exam do not count for or against the applicant's score, they should be given an additional thirty (30) minutes to complete. K. Tedesco responded that it can be taken into consideration and will see what is feasible.



C. Broccoli asked if ABC dictates the length of time for exams and if an extension could be requested. K. Tedesco stated that there may be flexibility, and that the details are in the contract with ABC.

W. Mitchell asked if the Committee could receive information on the quarterly pass/fail rates for examinations. K. Tedesco agreed they could receive the information moving forward.

J. Bonaccorso asked if there were any more updates or questions on Program/NJDEP updates. Hearing none, moved onto the next agenda item.

4. Course Approvals

- *Ocean County VOTEC Instructor Renewal*

J. Bonaccorso began the discussion by stating that the form indicates the two teachers, but there is no information provided on the teachers.

K. Tedesco agreed and stated that one of the NJDEP's questions for the Committee was if a whole new packet is required to be submitted for renewals. Ocean County VOTEC was under the impression that that they did not need to send a whole new packet.

J. Bonaccorso replied that indication of previous approval or any other evaluation of approval is required.

After some discussion amongst the Committee members, it was decided that the Committee would request a submitted statement indicating that the instructors had been previously approved.

- *Various AWWA Approval Requests*

J. Bonaccorso began discussion by stating that AWWA has its own numbers and don't really need to request approval but did have questions relating to a few of the courses. Asked W. Mitchell why the organization would not select the wastewater category for courses such as Backflow Prevention and Basic Math and Chemistry, felt they applied to both water and wastewater.

W. Mitchell stated he was not sure why but agreed to make a note of it and ask them why.

R. Fullagar added that the AWWA courses for Membrane Processes and Security Practices could apply to wastewater as well. J. Bonaccorso agreed with the Membranes course but stated that the Security Practices course did not appear with any real information. Added that AWWA do not need to come to the Committee.

- *GoldShield Confined Space Entry*

W. Mitchell noted that GoldShield did not provide an agenda with their request, making it difficult to gauge how their credits are awarded.



R. Fullagar added that he did not see a copy of the handouts or a copy of the evaluation form and would like to see a justification on the half-day length of the course because it seemed too long.

The Committee was in agreement that GoldShield needed to submit more information. J. Bonaccorso asked for a motion. R. Fullagar motioned and R. Eustace seconded. Hearing no objections, the motion passed unanimously.

- *Nezat Training & Consulting Inc. Sewer Cleaning Training*

This agenda item appears to have been accidentally skipped over by the Committee.

- *EFCN – Planning and Development*

J. Bonaccorso asked the Committee if they had noticed any issues with the request.

W. Mitchell stated that he looked at their agenda and counted everything up, noticing that the applicants gave themselves an extra hour by including their allotted break time.

K. Tedesco and some other Committee members agreed.

J. Bonaccorso stated the applicants need to be alerted that break times do not count and need to justify the length of their course in a resubmittal.

- *Jacob's Engineering Group Module 1 Operator Course*

W. Mitchell stated that the applicants gave themselves credit by including their allotted break time in the course agenda, noting that their agenda would add up to 1.75 hours as opposed to the 2 hours claimed on the application

After some discussion between Committee members, R. Fullagar stated that he felt Jacob's Engineering was the most complete. K. Tedesco agreed that they were the most comprehensive submittal.

J. Bonaccorso stated that the Committee may have to tell Jacob's that they are asking for 2 hours but their course time does not add up to 2 hours. Wants consistency.

5. New Business

J. Bonaccorso asked K. Tedesco for an update on the financial status of the training fund.

K. Tedesco responded that she was unable to secure the information before this meeting and is still working on it. Clarified that it is a matter of recent internal changes and was previously managed by employees and programs that no longer exist within NJDEP.



J. Bonaccorso expressed his concern that the training fund monies could be absorbed into the general fund and stated there was precedence for that to occur. Reiterated that the Committee would like to know the status of the training fund.

J. Bonaccorso moved on to the 2022 Workplan Items under New Business.

K. Tedesco stated that there have been some discussions with the Board of Examiners and that several suggestions have already been made. One of the suggestions was that some members from both the Board of Examiners and the Advisory Committee get together to form a collaborative subcommittee in order to converse and streamline processes. Another was to put together "Welcome Packets" for new Board and Committee members.

J. Bonaccorso stated that forming subcommittees would be feasible, as long as they are provided a list of target subjects.

K. Tedesco stated that a subject of interest would be online training courses and their curriculum requirements. Would like it to be considered as a subcommittee topic.

J. Bonaccorso suggested having a subcommittee for discussing the timeframes of application submittal and resubmittal before the Committee's formal review.

K. Tedesco suggested another topic, regarding the removal of the New Jersey-specific regulation questions from the examinations and the challenges that created. J. Bonaccorso agreed. W. Mitchell pitched having a New Jersey regulation course in addition to the existing requirements.

K. Tedesco stated that NJDEP's stakeholder sessions on the Licensed Operator rule renewal provides new opportunities for addressing issues.

J. Bonaccorso moved on to the next agenda item.

6. Public Comment

P. Schorr stated he was particularly interested in getting the pass/fail information and the course approvals, mentioning that NJIT is ramping up its own courses and initiatives to bring students into the Intro Course to Water and Wastewater. Asked if keeping the Advisory Committee apprised of updates on instructors, course material and any other items on the checklist is correct.

J. Bonaccorso agreed that was correct and stated the Committee needs to remain consistent one year to the next, or at least updated with any changes.



W. Mitchell stated that there was some confusion regarding Mike Furrey and the status of approval for NJIT's Advanced Course and asked for clarification. K. Tedesco stated that there was still clarification needed on some components before the course was approved.

P. Schorr clarified he was speaking to the approved Intro Course. Added that he would like to see it opened up to more students.

J. Bonaccorso added that required college courses like math, chemistry and physics could potentially contribute towards a reduction in required hours for the water and wastewater courses.

P. Schorr agreed and asked the Committee to consider this and cross reference other universities such as Rowan, Rutgers and Keane, or other universities that offer water and wastewater courses for a civil engineering curriculum.

P. Carolan asked to add a comment regarding the course supplementation, stating that she felt it was a great opportunity and would help bring in engineers into the licensed operator field. She expressed that she had more concern regarding the hands-on components of licensed operator training and what is covered at internships rather than the number of required classroom hours. Would like to see the practical experience fleshed out.

P. Schorr stated that he had talked to Newark and was advised through AWWA that there is an interest amongst utilities to have interactions with nearby schools, done on a volunteer basis. Added that he is looking for a formalized and genuine hands-on experience without liabilities.

R. Fullagar stated that Middlesex would volunteer their laboratory, and that it is non-union and would provide safety training beforehand. Would also pay.

W. Mitchell stated that practical experience should be maintained as a part of course structures. Could also sponsor a course along with a university.

P. Carolan stated that Mount Laurel MUA would also step up for some southern schools and can work to garner additional support from other systems.

After hearing no requests for comment, J. Bonaccorso asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. W. Mitchell motioned and R. Fullagar seconded. Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 11:12 A.M.

