

Minutes – Thursday, January 10, 2008

State Well Drillers and Pump Installers Examining and Advisory Board

Board Members Present: Art Becker (Master Driller/Acting Chairperson)
 Anthony Tirro (Master Driller)
 Joseph Pepe, Sr. (Pump Installer)
 Dick Dalton (NJDEP)
 Fred Sickels (NJDEP)
 Karl Muessig (NJDEP)

Board Members Absent: Norman Primost (Master Driller/Chairperson)
 Pete Demicco (Public Member)

NJDEP Staff Present: Pat Bono (Section Chief) Holly Papp
 Julia Altieri Steve Reya
 Brian Buttari Michael Schumacher
 Melinda Strahle

Others Present: Gary Poppe (Kaye Well Drilling)

- 1. Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order by Art Becker at 9:35am with a quorum present.
- 2. Review of Minutes from November 8, 2007 meeting** – The Regular Session minutes from the November 8, 2007 meeting were review by the Board. Art Becker would like to change the spelling of George Strycker’s name in item #5; it was originally spelled incorrectly. A motion to accept the minutes with the suggested change was made by Anthony Tirro; seconded by Dick Dalton.

The Executive Session minutes from the November 8, 2007 meeting were reviewed by the Board. A motion to accept the minutes with no changes was made by Fred Sickels; seconded by Anthony Tirro.

- 3. Testing and Licensing Issues**
Pump Installer Exam Results – Steve Reya noted that this was the first testing cycle in which the new Pump Installer Exam questions were used. Joseph Pepe would like to know if the applicants are all first-time takers.

Joseph Pepe said that he doesn't think that applicants should be allowed to review the test they took, and then come back and take the same exact exam. Art Becker stated that a quick review shows that only one person passed the technical section of the test, and only 25% of the applicants passed the regulatory section. Fred Sickels noted that it is difficult to manage a big bank of questions, and if the NJDEP were to create multiple test versions, they would have to make sure that when the questions are rotated, that each exam is as hard/easy as another. Fred Sickels thinks that the NJDEP might have to lower the passing score to 75, or increase the amount of field experience required. Art Becker pointed out that if the passing score was 75, not that many more applicants would have passed this last exam. Anthony Tirro thinks that we need to lower the passing score. Art Becker and Joseph Pepe agreed that there is no sense in lowering the bar (difficulty of the tests), however lowering the passing score might be considered in the future.

Fred Sickels said the fact that there are people who have taken the exam multiple times and are still failing shows that something needs to be done. The Board asked when the regulations would be changed again. NJDEP staff says that it might be in the near future, in order to add-in e-Permitting requirements. Karl Muessig asked if the Board has to wait until the regulations are changed to lower the passing score if they decided to do that. NJDEP staff answered yes. Art Becker thinks that the Board needs to consider what can/should be done; thinks lowering score might be the right option. Dick Dalton wondered if the Pump Installer exam has historically been the exam that more applicants pass? Art Becker and Holly Papp said no; the Monitoring Well exam usually has the best passing rate. Steve Reya noted that usually, approximately 20% of the applicants pass the Pump Installer exam. A motion to accept the Pump Installer Exam Results was made by Dick Dalton; seconded by Anthony Tirro.

Soil Borer Exam Results – Holly Papp noted that this was also the first testing cycle using the newly revised Soil Borer questions. Art Becker asked if those applicants who are noted as “Passed MW Test” actually paid for, and took, 2 tests that day? Holly Papp said yes, and added that Moustafa Abouelmagd didn't have time for his Soil Borer test, but passed the Monitoring Well test – so it is a moot point. Art Becker noted there was an approximate 17% passing rate.

Art Becker said there is a gentleman who has been in the drilling industry since at least the early 1970's, took the Soil Borer exam this past cycle, and didn't pass. Art Becker added that this person did, at one time, have a drilling license; however, he let it lapse. Art Becker thinks most people don't study, and that is possibly why they fail the regulatory section; what is scary is that they are also failing the technical side and are out drilling everyday. Art Becker said it doesn't seem like there are enough drilling companies that are spending enough time to teach their applicants.

Joseph Pepe noted that the onus is on the person taking the test; that they need to know/understand the information. Joseph Pepe worries that licensing boards, in general, take the same thought process that schools take – to just push students forward, not holding anyone back. He thinks that maybe we shouldn't keep lowering the bar; whether that means lowering the passing score or making the test easier. Joseph Pepe wonders why you would want someone who has taken and reviewed the test multiple times, and still fails; eventually getting a license and doing work?

Art Becker recognized that it would be too hard to get multiple versions of the regulatory section of the test. Pat Bono thinks it would be helpful to hold review sessions before the exams in order to help the drillers prepare properly. Karl Muessig believes that attending a review session is studying in a way. He also thinks some questions are geared directly to what is said in the texts (study material). Art Becker stated that clearly we all agree that there is some kind of disconnect, and he agreed with Joseph Pepe that we shouldn't make the exams easier. Anthony Tirro said that the California driller's test is completed on the computer, and that you can purchase versions of the test and practice on them. Anthony Tirro said he sat with his applicants last round to help them review and they all passed. A motion to accept the Soil Borer Exam Results was made by Karl Muessig; seconded by Fred Sickels.

Monitoring Well Exam Results – Holly Papp noted again that this was also the first testing cycle after revisions were made to the Monitoring Well exam. Joseph Pepe asked if the Soil Borer and Monitoring Well Driller applications both require 3 years experience; Holly Papp said yes. Joseph Pepe confirmed with Holly Papp that Pump Installers were the only license class that only requires 1 year experience.

Art Becker noted that there was a greater than 50% passing rate on this Monitoring Well exam. Holly Papp noted that there were quite a few first-time takers that passed, as well. Art Becker thinks that the difference between Monitoring Well Drillers and the other two (Soil Borers and Pump Installers) is that they are out with a consulting engineer every day of the week; the daily regiment of the business is a better learning environment for the driller. Art Becker said this is shown by there being a significant difference in the passing rate compared to the other two. Art Becker said that almost all Monitoring Well installations have a specific scope of work and every job is attended; the drillers are under the influence and scrutiny of the client/engineer. Art Becker says that since the Monitoring Well test came about in 2001, they have always had the highest passing rate. A motion to accept the Monitoring Well Exam Results was made by Anthony Tirro; seconded by Dick Dalton.

Gary Poppe made a comment that he agrees with Art Becker about the Monitoring Well Drillers who are working with a consultant on a job. He sees that as well with the towns that have mandatory witnessing for water wells; you

have to know more and are checked. Gary Poppe thinks we would see the passing rate coming up if there was more oversight from regulating authorities. Fred Sickels noted that not every town or county has mandatory witnessing. Gary Poppe said that in a heavily regulated town, all the drillers are doing the work the same. Fred Sickels said we'll never be able to regulate everyone, everywhere. He thinks the NJDEP needs to get towns to step up oversight in order to help. Gary Poppe said that not all of the town and/or county inspectors have knowledge about what they are inspecting, and what they should be looking for. Art Becker thinks that those that are disciplined in the industry need to do seminars, continuing education, and programs to teach the young drillers; they are not getting the information and experience they from their employers. Pat Bono asked if the NJ Groundwater Association has any videos or training seminars, etc? Art Becker doesn't think they have much....they might be working on it. Fred Sickels would like to have some of the NJDEP staff work on training the inspectors in towns and counties (when we get time).

- 4. Update on Board Vacancy Applicants/Process, New Request for Applicants for upcoming July vacancies (Master Well Driller and Public Member) –** Pat Bono said they are a little slow on getting the memo up to the Commissioner's office for the appointee who is to replace Robert Stothoff; but that it is moving. She said the NJDEP is going to post notices for the upcoming July vacancies on the NJDEP website soon. The new members would officially come in for the July meeting. Pat Bono would like to have the positions filled before the May meeting in order to have the new members attend the May meeting. Fred Sickels noted that there was a pretty decent response for the first vacancy, and that we need to keep those people in mind, as well, when we review applicants for the upcoming open positions.

Art Becker asked if the Board will be looking to replace Pete Demicco and Norm Primost? Pat Bono said yes, but that filling Pete Demicco's position will be a little more tricky since the person can't be a driller or pump installer. She said the NJDEP will be sending a notice of vacancy to water companies and environmental consulting firms. Karl Muessig asked for the regulatory description of Pete Demicco's position. Art Becker read the description from the regulations "One member not employed by the State and who has no pecuniary involvement in well drilling or pump installing". (Fred Sickels left the meeting at 10:25).

Art Becker asked why the old vacancy appointment recommendation didn't go to Commissioners office right away. Pat Bono says some things got held up in November and December but has now gone up.

5. Technical Issues

Update on new grout demos – Steve Reya said there is no new update on the Cetco geothermal grout mix demonstration; we have to meet them on site to do pumpability testing and the company is experiencing scheduling problems. Steve

Reya said that there is an update on the Morrison geothermal grout issue. The 14 wells that were completed with the non-standard mix are being drilled-out (starting 1/9/08). Steve Reya was onsite and Morrison got down to 145' when drilling-out the first well. He stated that there were pockets where the grout was solid and hard and then other pockets where it was soft. Morrison was switching back and forth between a hammer and roller bit. Steve Reya noted that there were a couple of voids where the rods dropped about 3 feet. Art Becker asked if the NJDEP will be onsite to oversee all 14 drill-outs? Steve Reya said that he will probably not be there all day every day, but will provide a good amount of oversight. Steve Reya thinks that it is going well, but slow.

Update on Wyo-Ben Grout – Pat Bono said that the NJDEP needs to set up a field demonstration, and she will find out why that hasn't happened. Art Becker stated that the NJDEP needs to send Wyo-Ben a letter and find out what's going on. Dick Dalton said he had been called by Wyo-Ben last summer, and he sent two memos over to Pat Bono, and thinks they talked to Pat Bono at that time. Pat Bono said we initially started contact with them, but she doesn't know what happened. Art Becker noted that he ran into an employee of Wyo-Ben at the National Groundwater Association convention in Florida who asked if Art Becker could find out where the NJDEP is with it. Pat Bono asked Art Becker to provide her with the gentleman's name and number (Stewart Krause), Art Becker said he will send his information over to Pat Bono.

Discussion of GPS units and training dates for i-Map/NJGeoWeb – Pat Bono discussed how the regulations, which require the submittal of coordinates of proposed well locations and actual well locations, become effective in July 2008. The NJDEP is changing the i-Map program; an entirely new program (NJGeoWeb) will be coming out soon. NJDEP will be providing hands-on training for the new system in order to make it easier for drillers to comply with the new regulations. She said the NJDEP has had some trouble getting the new system up and running, and that it is supposed to be operational in March. The driller training sessions are planned for April. The sessions will be free to drillers/drilling companies, there are currently 8 sessions available. Each company will be allowed to send (up to) 2 people to the training. Pat Bono said that the NJDEP is also thinking about having some additional presentations (one in northern NJ and one in southern NJ), showing how to use the program for those who are not able to attend any of the training sessions. Step-by-step instructions on how to use the program (to acquire the required coordinates) will also be posted to the NJDEP website. Art Becker asked if it would be appropriate to show a demonstration on how to use the program at a NJ Groundwater Association meeting? Pat Bono said that all that is needed to perform the training is internet access; and she was thinking of holding a session at the Pequest Hatchery in northern NJ. Joseph Pepe asked if the instructions will be sent out to the drillers? Pat Bono said yes, it will.

Pat Bono explained that there will be a driller profile, which will have all the options a driller needs, and nothing they won't need when they log on. Karl Muessig mentioned that the NJDEP had a lot of problems with the new software; initially they tried to put too much information in it and that slowed the program down. Pat Bono added that the treasury has more control over it now and that is taking more time. Art Becker said that he will get the word out to the NJ Groundwater Association that they should try to show this training at one of their meetings. Art Becker asked if this new system (NJGeoWeb) isn't available by the July 1, 2008 deadline, if the requirement is still viable? Pat Bono assured that, yes, drillers will still be held to the requirement and will have to use i-Map to find their coordinates. She added that the April training sessions will be on the same system that the drilling community will be using.

Pat Bono mentioned that the NJDEP is starting to receive emails about GPS units. Lou Jacoby (GIS) has been getting emails about units as well. Art Becker, speaking on behalf of the NJ Groundwater Association, said that the Association committee reviewed and discussed the required parameters for the GPS units, went to 3 leading manufacturers, and found 2 units that would work. He said that the criteria they used included user friendliness, price, and compliance. Art Becker believes the committee saved drillers time on researching what is available and what meets the required standards. Art Becker noted that he wants to make sure that the public and NJDEP understand that the Association, in no way, dictates what needs to be done or bought. Pat Bono said that Lou Jacoby has been answering questions about what units meet the required specifications and what does not. Pat Bono reminded everyone that the NJDEP can't recommend units, they can only require that the units used meet our standards. Art Becker reiterated that the Association is not buying and selling the unit that they recommended, they only set up a good deal for members to take advantage of.

Other Issues

Gary Poppe would like to speak about the no-tank system for wells; which actually places a tank inside a well (mostly irrigation wells). He has a no-tank system at his house, and has installed a number of them. Gary Poppe stated that on January 9, 2008, he was converting a well to include a no-tank system in Marlboro Township (Monmouth County). The well in question was drilled in 2001 as a domestic replacement well. The house is now supplied with city water, and the owner wants to keep the well for irrigation purposes. The local health officer performing oversight on the work stated that she won't accept a no-tank system for that well because it isn't an approved method. She told Gary Poppe that he needs to provide a letter from the NJDEP which states that the no-tank system is an approved method. Gary Poppe stated that he has installed approximately 25 to 30 of them in the past couple years; and that the main reason his clients have them installed is for aesthetic purposes. Karl Muessig asked if the regulations include anything about tanks. It was confirmed that the regulations do not include any specifics about tanks/tank systems. Art Becker said he's not in the water well field, but looking at the regulations, there is no discussion about

tanks; he therefore thinks you can place the tank in any reasonable place. Julia Altieri said it would have to be a local code that prevents it from being approved. Art Becker noted that it is a technology that has been around for some time and is widely used in the Midwest. Joseph Pepe asked Gary Poppe some questions about the construction and placement of the tank system; Gary Poppe explained the system and how it works. The Board agreed that the health officer's request is not under the jurisdiction of the NJDEP. Pat Bono said the health officer can call the Well Permitting Bureau and discuss the situation with her.

6. Program Updates

Update on e-Permitting – Mike Schumacher explained that the e-Permitting program is still going thru, however they are still fine-tuning a few things. The latest update is that we are adding some automatic approvals to it. Anthony Tirro asked if the program will also be able to be utilized for test borings? He also asked when will it be up and running? Mike Schumacher said they are supposed to be getting a revised cost estimate today, and that they are still waiting on a final design for it. He said they definitely won't see anything before the fall, and testing might start in June. Pat Bono informed the Board that the contract end is coming up and that the fall seems to be the realistic timeframe. She said that the NJDEP will be testing the program in the summer. Pat Bono noted that they have become aware that the Bureau is getting a lot of attention on this because they issue so many permits. OIRM (Office of Information and Research Management) is looking at it and starting to see the potential; so well permitting has been pushing to see what approvals can be done automatically. She said in the best case scenario, drillers might be able to get some permit approvals before walking away from computer, or possibly over one night. Anthony Tirro said that right now it's taking 3-4 wks to get a permit back. Pat Bono agreed that maybe with taking into consideration from the time when you put it in the mail, to getting it back, that might be accurate. Mike Schumacher said that it will be necessary to keep in mind that the more permits that come in on the portal, the faster the entire process will be. He said the paper process will actually slow down when we start using e-Permitting because more data will need to be entered manually on the NJDEP end.

Anthony Tirro asked if it will still be necessary to send in a paper well record. Mike Schumacher explained that drillers can submit well records online as well. The system will handle permits, records, abandonments, and cancellations.

Pat Bono said that the cost of the program has turned out to be much higher than thought at the beginning. The reason for the extra expense is that they are trying to make it a smart program from the beginning. Art Becker pointed out that the initial cost is substantial, but in the long term it will be cheaper. Pat Bono said that the NJDEP's tendency is to build it small and add things to enhance it later. She said they've argued that it needs to be done correctly from the beginning.

Art Becker asked at what point details be available as to what kind of portal there will be and how many people will have access to it? He asked if it will be based on a well driller, or is it going to be by company? Art Becker would prefer if it was the licensed individual who is responsible; but says in reality, it ends up being the company. Mike Schumacher said that if something is wrong with the permit application, the problem goes back to the company and not the driller. It might end up going back to the facility administrator or whoever certified that submission. Mike Schumacher wasn't sure which one it will be at this time.

Mike Schumacher noted that GPS coordinates for soil borings will be a required submission through the portal; however, only one coordinate will be required for a site-wide permit. Karl Muessig asked if the program is completely designed. Mike Schumacher said that we had one draft that had over 100 comments. The next draft might become the final version, and has had 40-50 comments made. Karl Muessig asked if there will be people brought in for a testing period/dry run. Pat Bono said we are hoping to get some drillers and drilling companies in to help us test it. Pat Bono said that e-Permitting is not the only program that is being worked on, and that we'll have to wait for the other programs' projects to be completed because they test everything all at once.

Art Becker asked if there is any further discussion on payment options for permits? Mike Schumacher said drillers will be able to pay using either credit cards or electronic checks. Art Becker asked if licensing will be included in the program; Pat Bono said not at this time.

Joseph Pepe asked if he can log into the site as a Pump Installer, or even as the general public, and find out the details of a well. Mike Schumacher said no. Pat Bono stated that the system is only meant to perform 4 functions (permitting, records, abandonments, and cancelations); what Joseph Pepe is asking for is a well search function. She said that eventually, we will be able to do a certain level of web based searches. Mike Schumacher added that they might eventually be able to use data miner to do searches on a well. He said the reason we couldn't add well searches to e-Permitting is that most of our data is scanned and not data-entered; it's not an easy conversion. Joseph Pepe asked if, once the well is drilled and the data is known and entered into the system, how will the NJDEP access this data? Pat Bono said that the information comes through the portal and gets "dumped" into NJEMS. Data miner will go into NJEMS and find what you are looking for. Pat Bono stated that so far we are only entering a couple of key fields and the rest of the info is scanned. With e-Permitting, all pieces of information will be searchable. Pat Bono said this will revolutionize access to this data. Joseph Pepe would like a place where, as a Pump Installer, he can enter what equipment they installed in a well. Mike Schumacher said that hopefully somewhere down the line they will be able to add that option to e-Permitting. A discussion of Pump Installer submittals of pump information when the driller doesn't install pump ensued. Pat Bono said that all information, unless restricted for some reason or another, is publicly available. In e-Permitting, every driller

will have his own username and password, and the system will be smart enough to let the user know if an administrative error has been made.

Brian Buttari reminded Art Becker that he wanted to discuss changing the technical regulations. Pat Bono said that there has been some discussion about getting to that eventually, but recently it has been moved up to the forefront. Pat Bono noted that the NJDEP has been very restrictive when they do and do not open regulations up for revision; however, because of e-Permitting, we might not have to wait as long. Pat Bono suggested that the Board and NJDEP use the revision (initiated by adding e-Permitting) as an opportunity to make other desired changes. Pat Bono suggested that the Board members push the NJDEP to make changes to the well regulations (including sending in comments on other issues that should be changed). Karl Muessig asked if the NJDEP and Board have a list of all the things that they had wanted to change during the last revision? Art Becker thinks that Kristen Tedesco has that list. Pat Bono said we are not sure who the rule manager will be. Karl Muessig asked if the NJDEP can send out the list of changes that was previously assembled? Art Becker asked the NJDEP to find out who the Board should contact to push for additional changes. Pat Bono said she's sure there will be a lot to add to it, and will send that list to the Board members for their review and reflection.

- 7. Adjournment** – A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Karl Muessig; seconded by Anthony Tirro. Art Becker adjourned the meeting at noon.