

IRRIGATOR ADVISORY COUNCIL (IAC)

May 8, 2008

Meeting Minutes

12100 Park 35 Circle, Building B, Room 201

Austin, Texas

9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

The meeting of the Council began at 9:30 a.m.

Attendees:

Council Members: Doug Goodwin, De Ville Hubbard, Carole Baker, David Bell, Jerry Lewis, and Suzanne Santo (by telephone)

TCEQ Staff: Tony Franco, Richard Allen, Tiffany Shelly, Candy Garrett

Visitors: Todd Magatagan

1. Call to order.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Lewis.

2. Roundtable discussion related to the future of the Irrigation Program including long and short term goals and the IAC's future role.

Chairman Lewis noted that the meeting was unique for the Council and asked that participants look at the broad scope of the Irrigation program in Texas and what changes the Council could make.

Mr. Franco discussed the key roles of the Council and expressed appreciation to the Council for their work during the rulemaking. Mr. Franco spoke about computer based testing offering more opportunities and convenience to potential licensees in both location and time that the test would be offered.

Mr. Franco stated that the Agency now has about 80% of all license renewals on-line, so there is a potential that a large number of applicants would prefer to take a computer based test. However, a paper test will still be offered. Mr. Franco stated there is no intent to "dumb down" the exam because there is a need to have competent, licensed individuals installing irrigation systems that conserve water. Mr. Franco stated that in looking at restructuring licensing requirements, we should look at simple requirements that would allow experience from multiple sources. Mr. Franco discussed the rulemaking

process and that the Council could assist staff in looking at ongoing issues that might be legislative mandates. Mr. Franco asked the Council to provide insight into public education and asked what could be done in the future. Mr. Franco asked the Council to help communicate factual information. There has been some miscommunication about the proposed new rules. Mr. Franco spoke about the issue of background checks; currently TCEQ has no statutory authority to conduct background checks on individuals seeking to become licensed irrigators.

Ms. Baker discussed the results of opinion polls that Texans across the state wanted to know “why”, so public education efforts would have to address the needs or reasons for taking action. Ms. Baker talked about past education efforts, such as the North Central Texas Council of Government spending \$4 million on such efforts. Ms. Baker discussed some websites like waterIQ.org and savetexaswater.org where you can find out more about water conservation. Ms. Baker talked about placing ads in different publications, such as Texas Parks and Wildlife, again stressing the importance of outreach and education. She discussed the need for financing, stating the Texas Water Development Board is requesting \$3 million, to be included in the budget for outreach and training purposes. Ms. Baker agreed on the need for a model program.

Chairman Lewis discussed the need for citizens to understand the new rules. Chairman Lewis also talked about the work that the Education Committee has initiated. Chairman Lewis noted that the Council was working closely with staff to look at training and testing issues. The work has been very beneficial to staff, and the Council should continue to support TCEQ staff. Chairman Lewis also stated the need for Local Government Assistance, so the Council could be in ally with the local governments.

Ms. Garrett discussed the need for literature in large retail stores, like Home Depot and Lowe’s. She stressed the importance of outreach and education to the homeowner, by way of websites and brochures.

Mr. Hubbard discussed the importance of looking to local ordinances as a model program, considering positive factors about the ordinances, as well as negative factors.

Mr. Goodwin claimed a lot of work needs to be done in a cooperative effort, and the Council is dedicated to working on their relationship with TCEQ staff. Mr. Goodwin spoke about outreach, claiming it is a tough hurdle, as well as getting information out to retailers and homebuilders. Mr. Goodwin claims the best solution is to build on what we have going and educate policy makers.

Mr. Bell discussed the rule writing process and claimed that value needs to be added to research in order to a good job. Mr. Bell noted license requirements

and spoke about the importance of web expertise. He claimed it is important to utilize the right people in the right places to market irrigation rules and best practices to the public. Mr. Bell discussed the six things to be successful, which involves sales and service, operation, research, finance, value added through staff, and outreach and marketing.

3. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned.