

IRRIGATOR ADVISORY COUNCIL (IAC)

May 9, 2008

Meeting Minutes

12100 Park 35 Circle, Building F, Room 2210

Austin, Texas

9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

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

Attendees:

Council Members: Doug Goodwin, Deville Hubbard, Carole Baker, David Bell, Jerry Lewis, Suzanne Santo, Don Weiss, Emilio Escobar, and Michael Murr.

TCEQ Staff: Tony Franco, Terry Thompson, Juanita Lopez, Bob Mann, Linda Saladino, Richard Allen, Tiffany Shelly, Candy Garrett

Visitors: Todd Magatagan, Richard Craig, Gene Reagan, Austin Smith, Bob Weible, Nora Mullarky, Hope Wells

1. Call to order.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Lewis.

2. Consider approval of minutes from the February 27, 2008 meeting.

The minutes were approved without any changes.

3. Special recognitions.

Representative Robert Puente, Richard Craig, Bob Mann, and Juanita Lopez received plaques for their contributions to Water Conservation in Texas. Hope Wells accepted on Representative Robert Puente's behalf.

4. Hear from individuals wishing to address the Council.

No one wished to address the Council.

5. Receive, Discuss, and Act on Staff Reports:

Ms. Garrett and Mr. Thompson reported on the status of Chapter 344 and Chapter 30 rules revisions. Staff proposals will be published on the agency's website on May 16, 2008 and commissioners should consider the items on June 4, 2008.

Mr. Thompson reported on licensing and renewals. There are currently 6,005 licensed irrigators and 203 licensed installers. The pass rate for landscape irrigators is 68.1%.

Mr. Thompson and Ms. Saladino discussed the future of computer-based testing. The tests would be accessible at community colleges, universities, or libraries because costs are low. Mr. Thompson discussed the option of allowing individuals to take a test immediately after training, as a convenience to the examinee. There was discussion that examinees would only see the part of the exam that they are re-taking, instead of all parts. Test fees may range from \$20 to \$50, along with the TCEQ application fee of around \$100 paid in advance. Mr. Thompson discussed the possibility of asking verification questions during the exams, and stated that the new computer-based testing would not do away with paper tests. In response to a question from Chairman Lewis, Ms. Saladino stated that it would be acceptable to use numerous manufacturers' products (such as controllers) in training classes. All manufacturers' devices should be represented and the discussion should be structured so that no preference is given to a manufacturer(s).

Ms. Garrett and Mr. Allen gave an update on enforcement actions from September 1, 2007 through April 30, 2008. There have been 39 Notices of Violation and 27 Notices of Enforcement issued.

Mr. Franco discussed staff vacancies. The interviewing process to fill Bob and Juanita's spots will be taking place beginning the week of May 19, and should be filled by mid-June.

Ms. Garrett discussed IAC replacements, as three vacancies will need to be filled soon. Staff sent out a reminder letter that the nomination period will close on May 31, 2008. Staff plans to have the nominations finalized by November.

Mr. Thompson gave a status update on irrigator inspector. The Education Committee is working on developing job tasks, curriculum, and examination topics.

Mr. Thompson and Chairman Lewis discussed the guidelines for the designated Honorary Irrigator. The individual must have served as a Licensed Irrigator for at least 20 years or be deceased or disabled, and therefore not able to perform duties as a LI. The time frame to develop the computer programming needed to implement an Honorary Irrigator program is 60 to 90 days, or before the next Council meeting on August 15, 2008.

Mr. Reagan asked if irrigators may replace backflow prevention devices. Mr. Lewis responded "Irrigators and Plumbers may install, replace or repair backflow devices on irrigation systems, but cannot put the irrigation systems into service until the backflow device has been tested by a Licensed Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester (BPAT). A Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester (BPAT) may only test and repair backflow prevention devices."

Ms. Baker discussed the "smart controller", and stated the system actually used more water when she tested the system at her residence.

6. Receive, Discuss and Act on Committee Reports:

Ms. Baker discussed public awareness options. Education about water conservation should be provided to the irrigator and the user. As far as water reuse, the user side is less informed. There needs to be communication on how to water. The water IQ campaign was mentioned, the website waterIQ.org gives knowledge about where water comes from and gives links to other water conservation websites. The Texas Water Foundation has done a lot of work on the private side. Savetexaswater.org will give links to irrigation sites.

Ms. Baker talked about a water conservation plan. A five and ten year plan for water conservation should be in place by May 1, 2010 and should include leak detection, and rules and ordinances; giving priority to conservation programs. If the plan doesn't go to the TWDB, then TCEQ enforces it. The TWDB will provide grants if in compliance and get conservation projects started. There is a need to improve citizen's knowledge of water conservation.

Mr. Hubbard presented and Ms. Santo discussed "Acceptable Topics for Irrigation Continuing Education Units". Adjustments to the document will be made and discussed at the August 15, 2008 Council meeting.

Ms. Baker discussed the WaterSense program. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's funds were cut, but the program may get money back. The WaterSense program is a work in progress in Texas, but irrigators can test to become recognized WaterSense irrigators. The WaterSense program will move towards certifying new homes.

7. Receive, Discuss and Act on New Business and additional items of interest.

Ms. Santo presented the possibility of creating a Long Range Planning Committee. This Committee would be concerned with five, ten, and fifteen year planning. For example, it would combine education and water conservation, legislative and rules, and add a Long Range committee. Ms. Santos suggested

setting up a training process for incoming members and assigning chairs for three year periods. These ideas may be placed on future Council agendas for discussion.

8. Adjourn

Chairman Lewis noted there are two additional meetings for the year, August 15 and November 14. The meeting was adjourned.