

MINUTES
South Carolina Board of Environmental Certification
Board Meeting
10:00 a.m., January 23, 2018
Synergy Business Park
Kingstree Building, Room 202-02
110 Centerview Drive
Columbia, South Carolina

Meeting Called to Order

Chairman, Elizabeth Williams, of Sumter, called the regular scheduled meeting of the South Carolina Environmental Certification Board to order at 10:00 a.m. Other members participating in the meeting Included: Charles Cortez, of Pelzer; Doug Kinard, of Prosperity; Ken Rentiers, of Columbia; Jimmy Rodgers, of Greenwood; Stacy Taylor, of Columbia; and Phillip Thompson-King, of Columbia

Staff members participating during the meeting included: Molly Price, Administrator; Meredith Buttler, Program Coordinator; and Hardwick Stuart, Office of Advice Counsel.

Mrs. Williams announced that public notice of this meeting was properly posted at the S.C. Board of Environmental Certification Office, Synergy Business Park, Kingstree Building, and provided to all requesting persons, organizations, and news media in compliance with Section 30-4-80 of the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

Invocation

Mr. Cortez gave the Invocation

Pledge of Allegiance

Introduction of Board Members and Others

Board members and Board staff introduced themselves.

Approval of Excused Absences

MOTION: To approve the absence of Board Member Robert G. Davis, Jr. and Sidney K. Tuck for unforeseen family and work issues.
Rentiers/Cortez/approved.

Approval of the August 15, 2017 Minutes

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the August 15, 2017 meeting.
Thompson-King/Rentiers/approved.

Chairman's Remarks-Elizabeth Williams

Mrs. Williams stated that she did not have any remarks.

Staff Reports

Mrs. Price reminded the board members when making a motion, to make sure the motion is clear, and that they speak loud enough to be heard by the court reporter and staff member who is taking the minutes.

Mrs. Price reported the board's current account balance as of December 2017 is \$517,354.20 and 9,017 active licensees.

Mrs. Price informed the Board that the Continuing Education Audit was completed on September 9, 2017. Of the 129 operators audited, 121 operators successfully completed the audit, 1 operator voluntarily surrender their license, and 7 operators were issued Cease and Desist orders. Ms. Price expressed concern that operators are not understanding the continuing education requirements and the importance of keeping up with their hours. Board staff have worked hard to update the board website to present clearer Continuing Education guidelines. Ms. Price suggested increasing the percentage of operators audited during the next audit cycle to increase operator awareness of the CE requirements. The next audit will take place in 2019.

In attempts to best serve Trainee level operators, Board staff will be updating all board communication and website information removing "Trainee Permit" language, reflecting the wording in the Board's statues and regulations as "Trainee license". The language change is designed to help operators understand the license and alleviate the confusion between the annual license renewals and the two year window in which they have to take and pass the 'D' or 'E' level exam.

Since May 2017, board staff have been collecting survey results with all environmental exams. The intention of the survey questions was to determine the relationship between pass/fail rates and operators preparedness. After sharing some brief findings at the annual conference last fall, ABC approached Board staff about collaborating together for a presentation at the WEFTEC 2018 Conference in New Orleans. On November 8, 2017, board staff Molly Price and Meredith Buttler, board chair Elizabeth Williams, ABC staff Paul Bishop and Gavin Moore met to discuss and analyze the collected survey results and proposed abstract. At this time, the abstract has not been selected for presentation at WEFTEC, but board staff will continue to collect and analyze data. Board staff then presented to the Board a comparison of pass/fail rates for the three new examinations: Biological Wastewater, Water Treatment and Water Distribution. The new exam information compared the pass fail rates for new examinations from May 1, 2017 to December 30, 2017 and the old examinations from May 1, 2016 to April 30, 2017. The largest pass/fail discrepancy is in the Biological examinations. The pass rate on the 2012 ABC exam was 43% (out of 592 operators) and the new pass rate is currently at 22% (out of 278 operators). Board staff then reviewed survey question answers to better understand the drop in the passing rate and found that the majority of operators taking the new exam had previously failed the old exam three or more times. With each month, board staff have seen a slow increase in the passing rates; however, operators are still failing to review the new study materials that ABC has published. The board has emailed the links to the study information out to operators three time and there is a section under

'Board News' on the Environmental landing page directing operators to the new study material. Water distribution passing rate for the old exam was 53% (out of 559 operators) and the new exam passing rate is currently at 35% (out of 270 operators). The largest discrepancy was in the level 'B' exams. Water treatment passing rate for the old exam was 60% (out of 517 operators) and the new exam passing rate is currently at 61% (out of 208 operators). The biggest discrepancy being in the passing rate of the level 'A' exams.

After review of the passing rates per exam, Ms. Price shared with the board the analyzed data that was submitted as part of the WEFTEC abstract/ potential presentation. The proposed presentation covers the six survey questions, analyzing them based on the pass/fail status. Ms. Price thanked the board for approving the use of the survey as it is providing valuable insight, not only to the new exams, but operator preparedness over all regarding examinations. Ms. Williams further emphasized the need to review the data as a whole rather than focusing on just pass/fail rates for the individual exams to best understand the effectiveness of the new examinations. ABC employed operators from across the country to write and review the exam, resulting in thousands of man hours spent on the validation of the exams. Ms. Price further added that all regional, bias, and regulatory questions were eliminated from the examinations.

Ms. Price shared that ABC is continuing to evaluate the exams and accepting feedback from the states that are now implementing them.

Ms. Price reported that she and board member Bob Davis attended the 2018 ABC Conference in San Antonio last week. Ms. Price shared that she spoke with several state boards who are now utilizing the exams. She found that we appear to have been one of the first states to implement the exams and cautioned the board that some of the other states will probably have higher pass ratios, due to mandatory training requirements and higher exam fees. There are also several states that are looking to adopt the new exams but because they have their examinations written into the statues, it will take time to update the statues to permit the new exams.

Board staff has been asked to attend several upcoming conferences, the SCRWA Summit in February 2018 and the SC Environmental Conference in March 2018. Ms. Price has also been asked to speak at the SCRWA Conference.

The next board meeting will be held on April 24, 2018 in room 202-02

Advisory Opinions, If Needed, Office of Advice Counsel

No advisory opinions were given during this meeting.

OIE Report-Office of Investigations and Enforcements

On behalf of Todd Bond, Ms. Price reported that there was no report at this time.

IRC Report- Office of Investigations and Enforcements

Ms. Price reported that the IRC met on January 16, 2018, to discuss three cases. The committee recommend a Dismissal of Complaint and two issuance of Formal Complaint.

MOTION: To approve the IRC report.
Kinard/Cortez/approved.

ODC Report-Office of Disciplinary Counsel-Erin Baldwin

On behalf of Ms. Baldwin, Ms. Price reported that there are two open cases.

Application Hearing

Mr. Dustin Clifford Autry appeared before the Board for an Application Hearing. He was not represented by counsel. His supervisor Mr. Kevin Kirkpatrick, SCDC, served as a witness. All persons testifying were sworn in by the court report. Application hearings are recorded by a certified court reporter in the event a verbatim transcript is necessary.

Executive Session

MOTION: For the Board to enter into executive session to seek legal advice regarding Mr. Autry's applications.
Thompson-King/ Rentiers /approved.

Return to Public Session

MOTION: For the Board to return to public session.
Thompson-King /Cortez/approved.

Board Chairman, Elizabeth Williams, noted for the record that no votes or actions were taken while in executive session.

MOTION: To approve Mr. Autry to become a Biological Wastewater Trainee.
Thompson-King/Taylor/approved

Unfinished Business

a) Biological Wastewater Treatment Examination Test Group Results and Feedback

Ms. Williams reminded the Board that at the last meeting it was voted and approved to select five 'A' level Biological Wastewater Operators to take the new level 'A' Biological Exam at the Board's expense. Feedback statements were provided by two of the five operators, one passed and one failed. Both operators mentioned needing more than the three hours to complete the exam. The operator who failed, mentioned studying the industrial wastewater information instead of the new biological information. In total, three of the five operators passed the exams. Ms. Price stated that at the 'A' level exam there are 18 math questions.

Mr. Walter Beard from the City of Sumter was one of the biological exam test group participants. Mr. Beard addressed the Board and stated that the new exam format of giving scenarios based questions will be much more valuable to an operator as opposed to regurgitating facts. Mr. Beard mentioned that he currently has two operators sitting for the exams and they both have failed to make any progress. Mr. Beard stated he thinks this is a lack of training on test taking skills. Ms. Williams stated that the course at CCTC, provides attendees with a booklet about test taking skills. It is on the operator to review it as it is not covered in the class. Mr. Beard stated that he intentionally did not study for the new exam prior to taking it and was one of the operators who failed the exam. He stated that had he studied the new material and had additional time on the exam been given, he feels as though he would have passed. Mr. Cortez asked if the math on the exam was relative to what the operators are having to do. Mr. Beard stated that the math is real-world; however, there are numerous instruments that do the math for you on the job. Mr. Thompson-King inquired as to Mr. Beard's work experience and background. Mr. Beard stated that he did not start in wastewater/water treatment. Through his various careers, he has had jobs focused more on chemistry and business, but once he began in the wastewater/water treatment he moved quickly through the exams. Ms. Price added that the ABC exams were designed to build on one another and therefore there was an advantage to taking them in rather quick succession. Mr. Beard was thanked by the Board for taking time to participate in the test group.

Ms. Price thanked the Board again for approving the five operators to take the level 'A' Biological exam as it provided the Board with valuable insight. Ms. Price asked if the Board would like to send an additional five operators to take the other 'A' level exams and provide feedback. Each operator would receive 12 hours of continuing education credit for taking the new exam. If the operators pass, the operators can receive a discounted rate on becoming a Professional Operator through ABC. Mr. Cortez stated that he would like to see Distribution done as there was a sizable discrepancy on passing rate. Cortez suggested focusing on either on level 'B' or 'C' as there are very few plants in South Carolina that require an 'A' level operator. Mr. Thompson-King advised focusing on the high level exams as there is a higher level of investment and therefore the operators are going to be more focused on preparation than at the lower levels.

MOTION: To approve the board staff to select five operator each to take the Water Treatment and Water Distribution examinations, expenses to be paid by the Board.
Thompson-King/Cortez/approved.

New Business

a) Approval of one hour time extension for 'A' level examinations

Ms. Williams stated that based on the biological exam group feedback that the 'A' level exam needed an additional hour to complete. The addition of the hour will add to the exam cost \$19 charged by PSI. Ms. Price stated that board staff had pulled together a list of examination costs from the various states utilizing the ABC exam and found that South Carolina was one of the lowest in the country. Currently the Board receives \$10 for every exam. Ms. Price stated that if approved, the cost for the level 'A' exams would increase from \$108 to \$127. She proposed that the Board move forward with the 1 hour time

increase for the level 'A' exams immediately and that the board would absorb the addition \$19 cost until July 1, 2018, when the fees would be changed. Ms. Price stated that LLR directors had been notified and approved the plan pending the Board's approval.

MOTION: To approve increase the time limit for all 'A' level exams from 3 hours to 4 hours and that the board would absorb the addition \$19 cost until July 1, 2018 at which time the fees would be amended and the \$127 level 'A' fee would go into effect.
Thompson-King/Cortez/approved.

b) CEU approval for Operations Challenge Participants

Mr. Greg Hill, the committee chair for the Water Environment Associations, came to speak to the Board on behalf of the participants and judges for the Professional Wastewater Operators Operation Challenge. Ms. Williams stated that South Carolina always has at least one team compete every year at the national level. Only teams who compete and win at the state level are allowed to move to the national competitions. Mr. Hill thanked the Board for having him. Mr. Hill stated that the operators who participate in these challenges are unable to attend outside workshops in order to fulfill their CEU requirements due to the number of hours needed to practice and prepare for the competitions. Mr. Hill stated that all teams begin their journey in the classroom before moving to application. In preparation, for each competition teams are given five different scenarios that could be tested on, with only three being selected during the competition. Mr. Hill testified that these operators have to be knowledgeable and very skilled across the board to compete in these events. He estimated that competitors spend roughly 104 voluntary hours over two months training for the competition and that judges spend roughly 48 hours preparing. He asked that the Board consider granting 12 hours of continuing education credit to competitors who have fully completed the competition and 3 hours of continuing education to the judges and coordinators of the event. Mr. Hill stated that certificates would only be awarded upon completion of the competition.

MOTION: To approve the granting of 12 hours continuing education credit for competition competitors and 3 hours continuing education credit for judges/coordinators possessing proper documentation.
Thompson-King/Kinard/approved.

d) Travel Approval for SCRWA Summit February 23-24, 2018

Ms. Price has been asked to speak on Friday afternoon at the Summit regarding the new examinations and why the Board adopted them as well as where study resources can be found. The association has already offered to pay for Ms. Price's hotel room on Friday. Ms. Price would like to bring Ms. Buttler along to provide her the opportunity to network with industry professionals and help in answering questions.

MOTION: To approve travel for Ms. Price and Ms. Buttler to attend the SCRWA Summit.
Cortez/Thompson-King/approved.

Discussion Topics

There were no discussion topics at this meeting

Committee Reports

There were no committee reports at this meeting.

Public Comments

There were no public comments at this meeting.

Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting.

Taylor/Thompson-King/approved.

The January 23, 2018 meeting of the S.C. Board of Environmental Certification adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

The next meeting of the S.C. Environmental Certification Board is scheduled for April 24, 2018, in room 202-02.