

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
STATE BOARD FOR CERTIFICATION OF
WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS OPERATORS
Board Meeting Minutes
December 9, 2020
Skype Call**

Board Members Present (via phone)

Ed Chescattie, Bureau of Safe Drinking Water (BSDW), DEP Secretary Designee
Joseph Swanderski, Chairman, Penn State University, Wastewater Operator
Mary Roland, Certified Water Operator
Mike Kyle, Lancaster Area Sewer Authority, Employee of a Political Subdivision
Mark Smith, Herbert, Rowland & Grubic, Inc., General Public (joined at 10:35a.m.)
Jeff Bickel, Aqua PA, Inc.
John Cantwell, Legal Counsel
Laura Chambers, Board Secretary

Non-Board Members Present (via phone)

Bill McNamara, BSDW
Jeff Allgyer, BSDW
Lori Wise, BSDW
Bill King, BSDW
Shalini Moola, BSDW
Mahendra Patel, BSDW
Theia Hofstetter, Bureau of Clean Water
Brian Chalfant, Policy Office

Public Present (via phone)

Wendy Malehorn, PRWA
Tom Gerring, PRWA
Brian Thomas, Utilities, Inc.

Chairman Swanderski took roll call to confirm all individuals participating in this Board meeting via conference call and called the meeting to order at 10:04a.m. Mr. Chescattie announced that the public participants on the call would be provided an opportunity for input after towards the end of the meeting conference call.

Approval of October 14, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Kyle asked to move on the last page, where it states the Board came out of executive session at 11:28, to immediately after where it states the Board went into executive session at 11:00, with the summary following. Ms. Roland motioned to approve the October 14th meeting minutes with Mr. Kyle's suggested edits. Chairman Swanderski seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of New and Upgrade Applications

Ms. Chambers presented the following new and upgrade license for Board consideration:

- 80 new water licenses
- 42 upgraded water licenses
- 20 new wastewater licenses
- 58 upgraded wastewater licenses

Ms. Roland motioned to approve all the new and upgraded license applications with the exception of CHR 267608 listed on page two of the new and upgrade evaluation report. Mr. Kyle seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Reciprocity Requests

Wastewater

James Surrena – Holds a South Carolina Class A Wastewater Treatment Operator License that was issued to him on January 24, 2017 and expires on June 30, 2021. His application documents 3 years, 1 month experience working at Broad River WWTP, in Irmo South Carolina, which is a class A facility using subclasses 1, 3 and 4. An operator is required to have a minimum of 3 years' experience in order to obtain a Pennsylvania Class B license. **Therefore, the Department's determination is that Mr. Surrena has documented the adequate experience relative to a WWB – 1, 3, 4.**

Regarding the comparison of examination questions, the applicant passed wastewater exams developed by ABC and administered in South Carolina.

The Department's recommendation: The Board should please review the examination information provided by South Carolina Operator Certification program staff and vote on whether Mr. Surrena has passed a comparable examination in the State of South Carolina.

Robert Lovenduski – Holds a New Jersey Class S1 Public Wastewater Treatment Operator License that was issued to him on October 21, 2019 and expires on September 30, 2021. Since July 2020, he has been employed at Warwick Township Water and Sewer Authority which is a Class B facility with subclass 1 and 4. His application includes 4 years, 2 months' experience working at Central Ave. WWTP, in Burlington New Jersey, which is a class C facility using subclasses 1 and 4; 1 year, 10 months' experience working at Mt. Holly MUA, in Mt. Holly New Jersey, which is a class B facility using subclasses 1 and 2; 1 year, 8 months' experience working at WAWA WWTP, New Jersey, which is a class D facility using subclasses 1 and 4. An operator is required to have a minimum of 3 years' experience in order to obtain a Pennsylvania Class B license. **Therefore, the Department's determination is that Mr. Lovenduski has the adequate experience relative to a WWB – 1, 2, 4.**

Regarding the comparison of examination questions, the applicant passed wastewater exams developed by ABC and administered in New Jersey.

The Department's recommendation: The Board should please review the examination information provided by New Jersey Operator Certification program staff and vote on whether Mr. Lovenduski has passed a comparable examination in the State of New Jersey.

Ms. Roland asked whether we only received a signature from Mr. Lovenduski's supervisor at his most recent facility of employment. Mr. Chescattie said that we should have received separate page 3 of the application signed by the supervisor from each facility where experience is applied to meet the minimum requirements to verify the dates of employment at each applicable facility. Board members agreed that Ms. Chambers should contact Mr. Lovenduski to obtain a separate page 3 signed by his supervisor from his most recent place of employment in New Jersey.

Scott Gibson – Holds a New Jersey N-3 Industrial Wastewater Treatment Operator License that was issued to him on May 6, 2010 and expires on September 30, 2021, he also holds a Delaware Wastewater III license which expires 2/2021. His most recent experience documented in his application is for a NJ plant. His application includes a total of 18 years, 6 months' experience. working at BP Terminal No. 4555 (NJ0005584), New Jersey, which is a Class C facility with various industrial treatment technologies including subclass 1. An operator is required to have a minimum of 2 years-experience in order to obtain a Pennsylvania Class C license. **Board should carefully review all information provided to determine if adequate experience has been documented for a WWC – 1.**

Regarding the comparison of examination questions, the applicant passed wastewater exams developed by ABC and administered in New Jersey.

The Department's recommendation: The Board should please review the examination information provided by New Jersey Operator Certification program staff and vote on whether Mr. Gibson has passed a comparable examination in the State of New Jersey.

Mr. Chescattie provided some additional information relative to Mr. Gibson's application, specifically regarding his experience, which appears to be mostly in industrial wastewater. He requested input from the Board members regarding their thoughts on the applicability of this experience towards applicable PA wastewater subclasses. Mr. Swanderski and Mr. Kyle agreed that based on resume and information provided by Mr. Gibson, the WWC-1 was the appropriate PA license via reciprocity.

Mr. Kyle motioned to issue the licenses for Mr. Surrena and Mr. Gibson consistent with the Department's determination and Board discussion regarding experience, and issue the license for Mr. Lovenduski contingent upon obtaining an additional page 3 of the application with a signature of the appropriately certified operator/supervisor from his most recent place of employment in New Jersey (WAWA WWTP – NJ0140767). The Board has determined that an equivalent exam has been passed by all three applicants in the associated accrediting state. Ms. Roland seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Board Secretary Report

Ms. Chambers asked the Board members for their input on what the 2021 exam schedule should look like, and that the Department has drafted an approach on how we might be able to reduce the impact of the pandemic on exams offered in 2021. Ms. Chambers asked Mr. Chescattie to provide more details for Board consideration.

Mr. Chescattie summarized that in calendar year 2019, the Department offered approximately 1750 exam seats, due to numerous pandemic related cancellations and delays, 1400 exam seats were offered in 2020. This was a major accomplishment due to extra efforts of approved exam providers and the Department to work together offer exams with masking, social distancing, and health and safety plans. The proposed goal for calendar year 2021 is to increase the number of exams to the greatest extent possible considering the pandemic. An optimistic goal would be to offer 2100 exam seats statewide in calendar year 2021. Ms. Roland commended the Department on efforts to offer 1400 exam seats during the pandemic.

Mr. Chescattie also asked for the Board's input on starting the exams a little later in 2021 (e.g., first week of May), instead of starting exams in the last week of March like in years past. The hope is that by May, restrictions on indoor group gathering size may be loosened to some degree, which should help avoid the potential issue of postponing and rescheduling exams which happened in the first half of 2020. Wendy Malehorn stated that PRWA is hoping to be able to offer 6 exams in 2021, which might help DEP reach its goal of 2100 seats for the year. Ms. Malehorn thought the Department's approach for 2021 made sense and PRWA could work with it. Mr. Bickel supported the plan, and suggested it was important for the Department to obtain input from exam providers regarding the May start date. Mr. Chescattie agreed and committed to conducting individual conference calls with each exam provider to discuss the delayed start exam schedule for 2021 and overall plan moving forward.

Mr. Bickel motioned that the Board concurs with the goal number of 2100 seats for 2021 as well as the Department's plan to have a delayed start date of May to open up exams in 2021 due to the pandemic, contingent upon completion of conference call discussions with each of the exam providers. Chairman Swanderski seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

2021 Board Meeting Dates:

Ms. Chambers reminded the Board they would need to have an official vote for the 2021 Board meeting dates she had emailed out on November 24, 2020 and received feedback on. Those dates are:

February 3
April 14
June 9
August 4
October 6
December 8

Mr. Kyle motioned to approve the dates. Ms. Roland seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Old and New Business

Mr. Chescattie reminded the Board members they are required to vote on a Board Chair once a year (each December) and asked the Board members for nominations, or for members to express interest. Mr. Swanderski expressed that he feels it is time to pass this important responsibility on to another Board member. Mr. Smith motioned to nominate Mary Roland as Board Chairperson. Mr. Kyle seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Board members thanked Mr. Swanderski for his long tenure as Board Chair. Mr. Swanderski expressed congratulations to and confidence in Ms. Roland taking over as Chair.

Mr. Kyle requested and led a discussion on the prioritization of COVID vaccinations for water and wastewater operators. After a brief discussion, the Board agreed it would like to make an important motion—stressing its full support behind high prioritization of licensed water and wastewater operators in the state of Pennsylvania for both COVID testing and vaccine dissemination to whatever extent feasible, recognizing that the final decision would come from PA DOH, PEMA and CDC, Mr. Smith motioned to support that effort. Ms. Roland seconded motion. Motion passed unanimously. Mr. Chescattie agreed he would follow up by conveying the Board's motion and concerns to DEP management.

Comments from the Public

Chairman Swanderski asked if there were comments from the public, beyond those previously conveyed by Wendy Malehorn. There were none.

The Board went into executive session at 11:26am to discuss Extension Requests, and one Criminal History Report.

The Board came out of executive session at 12:01pm.

Criminal History Report

Wastewater Applicant 267608 requested certification for WWA-1. Client was arrested August 8, 1989 for one count of Possession Of A Controlled Substance (M) – Plead Guilty. Client was arrested August 8, 1989 for one count of Manufacture Of Controlled Substance (F) – Plead Guilty. Client was arrested August 8, 1989 for one count of Criminal Conspiracy Manufacture, etc., of Controlled Substance (F2) – Plead Guilty/Sentenced to regional correctional facility 1989. Parole Start Date January 3, 1994; End Date January 2, 1997.

Recommendation: Based on the nature of the offenses (not related to water or wastewater), the length of time since the offenses, and previous actions taken by the Board for similar criminal histories, it is recommended that the certificate be approved for this applicant.

Extension Requests

Operator ID 310832 – Has a water license which expired on September 30, 2020. The operator was required to obtain 15 hours of training, which he obtained as of October 5, 2020. (He had obtained 12.5 hours prior to September 30th, and the remaining 3 hours as of October 5th.) His extension request documents extenuating circumstances due to the pandemic.

Operator ID 199483 – Has a wastewater license which expires on December 31, 2020. The operator was required to obtain 30 hours of training, and currently has obtained 0 hours. He is requesting that we accept the >1700 hours of training that he provided for others towards his continuing education training hours or grant him an extension until PA Rural Water is permitted to conduct its ASSE training again. Based on information provided, none of the training he mentions in his application appears to be DEP-approved training; therefore, it would not be counted towards his continuing education training. His extension request documents extenuating circumstances due to the pandemic.

Operator ID 197044 – Has a wastewater license which expires on September 30, 2021. The operator is required to obtain 30 hours of training, and currently has obtained 0 hours. His extension request summarizes that due to the pandemic he does not believe he will be able to obtain all 30 required training hours and is requesting an extension of one year—until September 30, 2022—to obtain his required training hours.

Ms. Roland motioned to approve the WWA-1 certification for Applicant 260678. Chairman Swanderski seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Roland motioned to approve the extension for Operator ID 310832 through October 6, 2020. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Roland motioned to approve the extension request for Operator ID 199483 through March 31, 2021. Chairman Swanderski seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Roland motioned to deny the extension request for Operator ID 197044. Mr. Bickel seconded the motion. Motions passed unanimously. Board's guidance is for this individual to spend time over the remaining nine months of his current license cycle to take online courses to obtain the necessary 30 hours.

Meeting adjourned at 12:02pm.