Meeting Minutes

June 14, 2023

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**Phone Conference ID: 848 242 831#**

**If you would like to attend the meeting in person, please see the below locations for Elko and Carson City.**

**Carson City Location**- Tahoe Conference Room, Bryan Building, 901 S Stewart St., Carson City, NV 89701

**Elko Location-** 1550 STP. Road, Elko, NV 89801 (Sewer Treatment Plant).

**Agenda**

1. **Call to Order and Introductions**.

Brandon Garden called the meeting to order at 10:05am

**Forum Members Present**-Greg Reed, Jim Kerr, Dale Johnson, Brandon Garden, Andrew Hickman

**Guests**- David Bruketta, Shelley Peterson, Liz Kingsland, Greg Sutter, Carlos Quiroz-Aguilera, April Holt, Ben Kahue, Brian Watts, Chris Bush, Bridget Harris, Linh Kieu, Krista Wannefried, Andrew Storla, Vince Johnson

1. **Approval of Forum Minutes from March 15, 2023.** – *Action Item.*

**Greg Reed-** Motion to Approve

**Jim Kerr-** Second

**Unanimous**

1. **NWEA Announcements and Wastewater Exam Results, Ashley Jacobson.**
2. **BSDW Announcements & Drinking Water Exam Results.**

**Carlos Quiroz-Aguilera-** Summarized the 4th quarter operator water exams. The results overall were pretty standard 50% passing rate for grade 4. Grade 1 had a 60% passing rate. Grade 2 had 50% passing rate. Grade 3 had 47% passing rate. The most missed for grade 1 was system components, disinfection and lab. For grade 2, the most that were missed was disinfection and lab. The most missed for grade 3 was disinfection, lab and equipment. Grade 4 had the most missed in the categories disinfection and system components.

**Linh Kieu**- Wanted to talk about the American Water College. In the past few weeks, they have been working with American Water College and they recently changed all their test prep classes to 36 hours or more. They will be updating their website in the next week or so.

**Greg Reed**-Reiterated if a person takes multiple 32 hour courses and they have a total that is over the 36 hour requirement, they should be able to use them.

**Linh Kieu**- Mentioned that point was made before and they did talk to American Water College to combine courses to give you over the 36 hour requirement. At this moment, operators can’t yet combine courses though.

1. **Review – Panel (Operator) Discussion – Capacity Development**

**Liz Kingsland-** Discussed that the office manages the state revolving fund. She is the capacity development coordinator. Basically, what she is doing is helping coordinate a couple of their nonprofit technical service providers that may need help. She went over some questions and wants to get some feedback or answer any questions. The first question is what are some of the difficulties hiring and retaining new operators?

**Jim Kerr**- Commented that one of the most typical things with hiring new operators is finding people that want to work. Ever since the pandemic, finding qualified people is really difficult. The majority of these operators have to haul chemicals so they should be required to have a CDL license. It hard to find CDL drivers and get them trained. Some of these systems can’t support the $6,000 bill to send someone for training.

**Liz Kingsland**- Wanted to ask a follow up question for that. Typically, every facility they have operators that drive/haul chemicals for their PWS?

**Jim Kerr**- Answered if you are going to haul for example chlorine and it is a small system, the operators have to do everything since they do not have guys to haul hazardous chemicals. So the operators are required to have a license to haul hazardous chemicals. You should be required to have a CDL for smaller water systems.

**Brandon Garden**- Wanted to mention that they also have had a difficult time trying to find someone that wants to work.

**Greg Reed**- Wanted to mention that one of the things that our industry was set up for the long term. That is what our retirement plan is, that you are in it for the long term. A lot of people are not looking for the long term. They might have to find a way to adjust the message because the message they use isn’t working anymore.

**Liz Kingsland-** The second question is there a resource that is lacking or that you need more of?

**Jim Kerr**- Commented that they can’t get the necessary parts to do necessary work. In Elko, they can’t find the necessary parts and if they do, the cost has tripled and they can’t be purchased.

**Greg Reed**- Commented that based on the 1st and 4th quarter that was just discussed, it seemed like disinfection was a problem area. Somehow, they need to do a better job at training on all the problem areas.

**Brandon Garden**- One of the issues they are noticing is that they are not seeing a lot of in person trainings offered. Maybe there could be more trainings offered in the field?

**Liz Kingsland**- Wanted to mention that OFA has put in new agreements that are agreed upon that they need to have in person trainings a lot more often. They are trying to get that done in centralized locations.

**Jim Kerr**- Had another comment on the subject. NDEP and the people that do not work in their offices, sometimes it is very difficult to get a hold of them. Sometimes they do not hear back in a day or week.

**Dale Johnson**- Also wanted to comment that any correspondence with NDEP lately through emails, they do not hear a response from them for a while or no response at all.

**Liz Kingsland**- Third question is can you share an operator’s success story from your public water system overcoming challenges and also state resources that helped overcome their problems if there was some?

**Brandon Garden**- Commented that one of their new hires, his own success came from his own initiative. He went a lot on his own time to research, take classes and did what he had to do to succeed in that industry.

**Dale Johnson**- Commented that they had a gentlemen hired from a temp agency and tested up and got certified. He wanted to do something else and left, but after a while he came back to work there. he is young and a really good worker.

**Jim Kerr-** They had another gentleman that they hired on and within 2 years, he tested all the way up to a distribution 3.

**Liz Kingsland**- Question 4 is they subcontract with a number of nonprofit organizations, and they would love to hear suggestions with what they can do with those contracts.

**Guest**- Suggested local high school and county job fairs.

**Jim Kerr**- Commented that in his opinion the problem with getting people to work in this field is the amount of study time and tests that they have to take. Maybe someone could set up college courses, so the certifications mean a little more to draw more people in to take exams to be certified.

**Greg Reed**- Mentioned that maybe some of these local colleges that can set up a water and wastewater associate degree or something like that? It would be nice if the operators could get like a dual certification.

**Linh Kieu**- Commented that he thinks UNLV or one of the southern colleges has something similar to this? Asked if anyone from LV was on the line to discuss?

**Jim Kerr-** He knows that John Solvie is involved in that on the wastewater side.

**Brian Watts-** Commented that he came up through with CSN and they offered courses for water and wastewater. You could get separate degrees. Through that college, he got an internship with Clark County Water Reclamation District. They have been in contact with colleges to do the same thing.

**Liz Kingsland**- Final question is does your water system have any technical assistance, questions, concerns that can be discussed in the next forum meeting?

**Jim Kerr**- Commented that they still need figure out how they are going to train operators in the state on the state regulations since they took those questions out of the exams.

**Linh Kieu-** Mentioned if they were going to make it required, they would have to change our regulations. They are planning on something to do with the renewals or a training that is required regarding the regulations. They are still trying to think of something to do though.

1. **Technical Assistance - Upcoming Trainings – Bridget Harris (RCAC) and Kevin Baughman (NvRWA).**

**Bridget Harris-** Talked about that they have 3 upcoming trainings. Next week, they have a training that is called A Day in a Life of an Operator. It is just an introduction what an operator is. The following week on Wednesday, there is an online training regarding water conservation and the last one is co-hosting with American Water Works Association. It is an in-person training in Carson City on disinfection on July 12th. The courses will be on their website, and she will send it to Carlos as well. They will be getting the second half of the year trainings in August.

1. **Forum Members: Training Needs and Open Comments meeting.**

**LCRR Training/Questions (Alex Lanza)**

**Alex Lanza-** He mentioned that they were able to produce the lead and copper rule inventory guidance document. He has been sending it out last month to as many people as possible and it is also on the website. He will reach out to opcert and send it out to all operators. In case anyone has any questions, please reach out to him.

1. **Public Comments**

**Vince Johnson-** Wanted to get clarification on you can’t get experience on distribution and treatment at the same time? Also, you have to hold your distribution or treatment for a period of time to get a grade 3 o 4 full?

**Linh Kieu**- Answered to the question on distribution and treatment certs that are held, if you are only gaining distribution experience, you can only be gaining that or if you are only get treatment experience, you can only be gaining that. That has always been the process unfortunately.

**Greg Reed-** Wanted to mention that the regulations talk about years of service. It does not talk about years in any particular category. If they have a misinterpretation of the rules, they ought to be addressing that either with a subcommittee or something like that. Secondly, they were just talking about how they get more operators involved, but we are holding them back. That needs to be addressed and fixed as well.

1. **Call for Agenda Items & Forum Goals & for the next meeting.**

**Greg Reed-** Mentioned that section 3.6 says the term of membership shall be two years.

Members can volunteer to be re-confirmed for additional terms. Vacancies will be filled by volunteer applicants at a regularly scheduled meeting, following announcement to the mailing list. Volunteers will be asked to provide background information and a statement of interest in serving on the Forum. Preference will be given to regular Forum participants.Doesn’t think they need to reinvent that since there is already a process. Membership attendance is not talked about in the mission statement.

**Brandon Garden**- Agrees with Greg. Asked if attendees can get contact hours?

**Linh Kieu-** Yes, just email us that you need something that you attended, and we will send you an email.

**Brandon Garden**- Suggested to add an agenda item on the next forum meeting to facilitate a subcommittee to review legislative and NRS, rules, regulations, etc.

**10. Scheduling next Forum Meeting – (3rd Qtr. meeting) – Action Item.**

•Tri-State, the Monterey Bay Room on Thursday, August 10 from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM

**Greg Reed**- Offered to be on the subcommittee.

Suggested September 13th at 10am since a lot of people would not be able to make it at the Tr-State date.

**Jim Kerr**- Motion to Approve

**Greg Reed**- Second

Unanimous

**11. Adjourn.**

**Andrew Hickman**- Motion to Approve

**Jim Kerr**-Second

Unanimous

**Adjourned at 11:41am**