

Minutes BLIC January 19, 2021

Minutes Taker – Dan Cao

Start Time: 11:05 AM

End Time: 12:52 PM

BOARD OF LANDSCAPE IRRIGATION CONTRACTORS

Meeting Location: Via GoToMeeting

Attendees:

Board Members

Gaetano Virone

George M. McCarthy

Robert Dobson

Kevin Luckie

Affiliation

Environmental Designers Irrigation

Spring Irrigation

Middletown Sprinkler

Assistant Director DCA

Legal Counsel

Domenic Giova

DAG

DCA Staff

John Delesandro

Dan Cao

Supervisor of Codes & Standards DCA

Administrative Assistant DCA

Absent

Kenneth Scherer

Hillsborough Irrigation

Official Start Time: 11:05 AM

John Delesandro read aloud the Open Public Meetings Act statement for the Board of Landscape Irrigation Contractors and announced that adequate notice of this meeting had been provided to the Secretary of State, and designated newspapers on January 14, 2021.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Dan Cao stated that the minutes for the previous meetings have not been completed yet.

John Delesandro stated that it can be reviewed at the next meeting.

Treasurer's Report

Kevin Luckie stated that there were no expenses charged to the account as of yet. He also went over the collected revenue since July and the current ending balance. Also, he stated that Treasury put some funds back in reserve and that it was a system-wide issue. He expects Treasury will put the funds back before all the balances are carried forward. On another note, he stated that an employee's salary will be charged back and later there will be discussion about the software replacement later on.

Communications

None

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Unfinished Business

Readoption of Regulations – Update

John Delesandro stated that the re-adoption of all the rules are up in the Commissioner's Office. Afterward, it will be moved to the Governor's Office within the next few days without interruption to the regulations.

Gaetano Virone asked if the regulations will be signed off this week?

John Delesandro answered that it might not be signed off this week but should be signed off in the Governor's Office by the next couple of weeks. Afterward, it will go to the Office of Administrative Law. He stated that we have time and the regulations does not sunset until next month.

Kevin Luckie stated that it is delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

George McCarthy asked in regard to the new rule, specifically about the 2 CECs for business law and the late fee, is 2022 when the changes will take effect?

John Delesandro answered yes, no contractors' renewals will be held up until the 2022 renewal cycle. Notices have been sent out and it specifies that changes will not take effect until 2022.

Gaetano Virone said that there is a winter tech with the Irrigation Association of New Jersey coming up. He will make sure that the rule change be addressed there and contractors be made aware. Also, he noted that distributors, manufacturers, and the Irrigation Association of New Jersey already require business law CECs.

Database Creation – Update

John Delesandro had a meeting with the software developer and the IT team about ten (10) days ago. He wanted to have the proposal for this meeting however, he does not have the proposal as of yet. He was told that the cost of the new system will not be different than the first estimate and is not to exceed \$50,000. Also, the original proposal was supposed to be done in Microsoft Dynamics, but there is another software package. This software package is also a Microsoft product, is supposed to be more amendable to the landscape irrigation program, and easier to develop. He stated that by the next meeting there should be more detail on it. He told the software developer and the IT team that the main objective is to have a forward-facing payment option to renew certifications and a way to track the CECs. He was told that it should be about an 18-week project.

Kevin Luckie stated we are dealing with a different vendor than the Microsoft Dynamics vendor.

Gaetano Virone asked 16 to 18 weeks from when?

Kevin Luckie answered that it would be 16 to 18 weeks from the acceptance of the proposal, by around June 1st.

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John Delesandro added that was the timeframe that the software developer and the IT team was talking about in the meeting. He also wanted the team to wrap this up in time for the next renewal cycle.

Gaetano Virone would like for this to be done by the middle or end of the summer to be able to catch any bugs, if any. He would like for it to be reasonably working in time for next year.

John Delesandro also added that in the planning stages that took place last year, everything was mapped out.

IA Contractor for 2021 – Update

John Delesandro stated that he tried to get in contact with the Irrigation Association (IA) to sort out what the contract looks like. Currently, the IA is doing the web posting for the CECs and the exam. The regulation change is pointing individuals to the IA's Certified Irrigation Contractor (CIC) exam. After they pass that exam, they can obtain the New Jersey certification. He was talking to the IA about arranging the contract so that applicants from New Jersey will get the member pricing for the exam instead of the non-member pricing. He added that since the database is not developed yet, the part of the contract for the web posting will continue into part of 2021.

Gaetano Virone asked if we are continuing the contract with what we had?

John Delesandro answered yes, except for the exam part of the contract.

New Business

2021 License Renewals

John Delesandro stated that there are contractors who are completing last minute requirements. He stated that Dan Cao and Robert Dobson are being bombarded with emails and CECs submissions. In addition, he added that there is still about 200 people to renew. He is hoping that the 2021 contractors get their CECs and fees in on time. He deferred to Dan Cao for further information.

Dan Cao added that a majority of the contractors are waiting on their CECs. She also stated that due to the Irrigation Association of New Jersey's Winter Tech taking place this week and next week, some of the CECs will be cutting it close to their renewal date of January 31st.

Gaetano Virone asked in regard to the status of the number of renewals compared to last year at around the same time.

John Delesandro believes that it is about the same as last year.

Gaetano Virone stated that the distributors and manufacturers are conducting numerous online classes now, so it should be easier to take courses for the required number of CECs.

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John Delesandro added that with the virtual training, there were some contractors who asked about a grace period during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there were many contractors who have been sending in numerous CECs.

Robert Dobson also added that there is an abundance of online courses, free ones and ones that have to be paid for. He stated that he has a concern regarding the handful of contractors who expired back in 2019 and they only have until January 31st to get in their requirements before they have to re-test.

Dan Cao stated that she sent out a notice back in February 2020 and another one this month to the 2019 expired contractors, stating that if they do not complete their requirements then they will have to re-test. She is currently in contact with five (5) 2019 expired contractors who are trying to complete their requirement as soon as possible.

Robert Dobson said that he believes the notices have had an effect, because the last few sets of CECs and renewals sent in were 2019 expired contractors.

Gaetano Virone asked what kind of increase is there on the pre-approvals of the virtual classes and what kind of protocol is in place for them?

Robert Dobson answered that the classes would go to Dan Cao first, then to George McCarthy for review and approval.

George McCarthy added that places that usually have many in-person courses are essentially providing the same courses, just in an online setting. He also stated that the biggest change is that courses have changed into virtual tech courses, but the total number of courses being given is about the same.

Robert Dobson stated that the challenge is how these courses are documented, because there are some sponsors who provide certificates while other do not. Also, he made a statement that if online courses continue then there needs to be a standard set in place to document and verify the contractors' attendance.

Gaetano Virone is concerned about how the online classes are conducted, because he wants to be sure that the contractor is the one actually attending the virtual course.

Robert Dobson also added that once virtual events take place, there needs to be a way for the contractors to document being at them.

Gaetano Virone said that we should figure out a minimum documentation to obtain credits and verify attendance in the courses and events.

John Delesandro stated that people are getting used to the virtual training compared to the past and it is easier for most people to take it from home. He also believes that the virtual training will improve as accountability measures are put in place by the providers who do not have it yet.

Gaetano Virone made the suggestion of having a committee to put together the minimum requirements for the virtual classes as a way to document the experience. He asked the Board for their input.

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George McCarthy agreed with putting together standards for the courses. Also, he stated that he will speak to some providers about how they go about their virtual classes and keeping accountability. Afterward, he will come up with some ideas on implementing a set standard.

Gaetano Virone also added that we can make changes to the standards later on based on the information collected.

Business Permit Status

John Delesandro stated that there are about 350 active business permits currently.

Enforcement Case Summary

John Delesandro stated that there were no updates on the enforcement case summary and there were not many complaints during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown.

George McCarthy moved to the topic of filling additional Board member seats and asked if anyone will be added.

Kevin Luckie answered that a few names were submitted for review, which are awaiting review and approval from the Commissioner's Office.

Robert Dobson asked if there is any benefit to the Irrigation Association of New Jersey's lobbying firm reaching out to the Governor's Office to speed up the process?

Kevin Luckie answered that it will help if the names of the potential members are with the Governor's Office. He stated that he will see the status and get back to the Board regarding the matter.

Gaetano Virone asked in regard to the timeline on this matter.

Kevin Luckie stated to allow him about a week and then he will send an email with the status update.

Gaetano Virone stated that he has someone in mind.

Kevin Luckie said that their resume is needed to provide to the Commissioner's Office and the Governor's Office.

Continuing Education Approvals – Virtual Training

There was previous discussion in the meeting and there were no further comments regarding this matter.

Public Comment

None

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George McCarthy motioned to go into Closed Session at 11:48 AM, Robert Dobson seconded. Motion carried, unanimously.

Robert Dobson motioned to return to Open Session at 12:49 PM, George McCarthy seconded. Motion carried, unanimously.

Robert Dobson motioned to approve the following future meeting dates: February 17th, March 17th, June 16th, September 15th, October 13th, and November 17th, George McCarthy seconded. Motion carried, unanimously.

George McCarthy motioned to adjourn meeting, Robert Dobson seconded. Motion carried, unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:52 PM.