



# State of New Jersey

## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

### DIVISION OF WATER SUPPLY & GEOSCIENCE

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**TAHESHA L. WAY**  
*Lt. Governor*

**SHAWN M. LATOURETTE**  
*Commissioner*

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
**Board of Examiners for Water and Wastewater Licensing**  
**Board Meeting Minutes For February 15, 2024**  
**Meeting held via Microsoft Teams**

*Approved by the Board on May 23, 2024*

**Board Members Present:** David Fields, Robert Genetelli, Ronald Anastasio, JoAnn Mondsin, Kouao-Eric Ekoue, James Mastrolakos, Wendy Simone

There were 7 Board members present, constituting a quorum.

**Board Members Absent:** Linda Ofori, Charles Jenkins

**Board Legal Representatives Present:** Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Kevin DeCristofer, NJ Division of Law

**NJDEP Staff Present:** Kristin Tedesco, Joseph duRocher, Malathi Prabhu, Tyler Rowe

**Members of the Public:** Michael Assante, James Fahey, Taylor Carden

#### **1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 AM, it was noted that there were enough Board members present to constitute a quorum.

DAG Kevin DeCristofer read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement (OPMA).

This meeting was held via conference call. Notice of the meeting and instructions on how to participate by phone were provided by public notice in advance of the meeting.

#### **2. Adoption of Meeting Minutes**

D. Fields pointed out that a date in the header was incorrect and T. Rowe noted the error. R. Genetelli asked for a motion to approve the November 29, 2023 meeting minutes with an edification regarding the date. R. Anastasio motioned to approve the minutes and W. Simone seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

### 3. Program Updates

#### ***Examination Updates and Pass/Fail Statistics***

J. duRocher gave an update on a meeting with WPI (formerly known as ABC) regarding recent their recent update to the online portal NJDEP staff utilize to access examination information. Some subjects discussed at the meeting consisted of the portal's new design, the ability for NJDEP staff to make some changes to lists, and some limitations regarding accessing older information. J. duRocher added that he inquired about state-specific questions and was informed that there are two types of examinations offered: Standardized examinations, which are currently utilized by NJDEP and cannot be modified, and Customized examinations, which are flexible and allow for specific questions but need to be constructed from scratch and have an average of a six (6) month roll-out per exam type.

R. Genetelli asked if other states tend to use the standardized exam or use the customized option. J. duRocher answered that his understanding is that it is a mix of the two.

R. Genetelli expressed frustration with the inability to retain the standardized examinations and simply add ten (10) additional state-specific questions to that exam.

J. duRocher added that another feature of WPI's platform update will be the ability to offer multiple modalities of testing. NJDEP would like to provide as many avenues as possible for operators to take examinations, and statistical analysis has shown that there is no discernible difference in pass rates between remotely proctored examinations and testing centers. Therefore, NJDEP plans to allow for both modalities as soon as WPI can implement it.

J. duRocher went over a pass/fail statistics analysis he compiled. Overall, it showed no discernible difference in pass rates between remotely proctored examinations and testing centers and that multiple attempts at examinations do not improve the passing rate. Additionally, a breakdown of exam performance within each Need-to-Know criteria category was provided.

A discussion regarding methods to improve pass rates began, and E. Ekoue, J. Mondini, J. Mastrokalos, W. Simone and R. Anastasio all stressed the importance of practical, hands-on training for operators. Some Board members asked NJDEP to consider implementing facility tours and training workshops to help bolster knowledge and exposure to various water and wastewater components.

#### ***Licensed Operator Rule Change Focus Groups Update***

T. Rowe gave a brief update on the status of the Licensed Operator Rule Change Team, explaining that a few stakeholder sessions have been held and that there are several more planned in the upcoming months. After the NJDEP holds the rest of the planned focus group sessions, the information gathered will be compiled and used to inform the beginning of the rule writing process.

#### ***Membership Updates***

K. Tedesco stated that she had received all the resumes and other information needed from the various Board members regarding their appointment packages, and that information will be sent to the Commissioner's Office shortly. K. Tedesco also added that in accordance with the Board's bylaws, the Board Member Elections will be held by the second meeting of 2024.



#### **4. New Business**

##### ***Reciprocity Applications***

###### **Michael Assante (T-4, CO)**

J. Mastrokalos gave a summarization of the application and stated that due to the experience provided, roughly one and a half (1.5) years of additional DRC would be needed for a T-4 license in New Jersey but would grant a reciprocal T-3 license now. Also noted that the Board would consider granting a reciprocal T-4 license once the additional DRC experience is obtained.

The Board was informed that Mr. Assante was present in the meeting and a back-and-forth discussion followed.

After additional discussion regarding the specific contents of the motion, R. Genetelli asked for a motion to grant a reciprocal T-3 license that is to be held for two (2) years, and after the experience is gained, reapply for a T-4 license through reciprocity. J. Mastrokalos motioned and W. Simone seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

R. Genetelli asked J. duRocher if NJDEP was able to monitor this, and J. duRocher confirmed it could and that an SOQ could be submitted in two (2) years with no need to fully reapply.

##### ***Subcommittee Update***

J. Mondsini stated that she is still waiting for legal review regarding the Board Member Handbook. J. duRocher replied that it is back from legal review and his group is planning to add some components.

R. Anastasio stated the revised examination application was sent back to NJDEP for comments. J. duRocher responded that his team has looked over the document and there were no comments that needed to be sent back to the subcommittee, and that it has been sent up to his management for further review.

W. Simone stated that the state-specific question subcommittee has sent their ten (10) questions to NJDEP and is awaiting comment. Noted that she is eager to begin the examination review process.

##### ***NJDEP IT Project Update***

M. Prabhu stated that there is nothing new to report since the last meeting but that work on the various IT projects have continued



## **5. 2024 Workplan Goals**

R. Genetelli stated that he wants the subcommittee goals to be completed in the next year. Would also like to see the committee address public outreach, either through NJDEP or with this committee. R. Genetelli then expressed his surprise upon hearing feedback that the Board was slow in their decisions, and cited the way applications are filled out as a reason for relatively slower turnaround times. Stressed the importance of filling out the application properly and suggested holding a seminar or Office Hours-like event for applicants on how to properly fill out applications.

R. Genetelli also suggested a subcommittee to address the appeals process, understanding that there is already a legal process for it but thinks it could be a good idea to have the Board be able to hear some of the appeals.

J. Mastrokalos stated that regarding Board consistency, he, E. Ekoue, and W. Simone had a call and brought up some subjects such as the definition of Direct Responsible Charge (DRC) and some feedback they had gotten from the community. They understand why folks are getting confused as to what is required when reading the current definition and suggested that NJDEP look into providing clarification on what is operating experience and what is DRC.

J. Mastrokalos added that conversations with some employees at larger utilities outlined what they saw as a cyclical issue: Applicants receiving a denial for a higher license due to missing DRC, but the higher license is needed to obtain the DRC.

E. Ekoue suggested that there should be a section on the application where applicants can articulate what they do that gives them DRC experience.

R. Genetelli expressed that the definition of DRC is a longstanding issue and stressed that its definition should be a focus for the upcoming LO Rule changes.

## **6. Advisory Committee Update**

R. Genetelli noted that the Advisory Committee has not met and asked D. Fields for any update.

D. Fields stated that he could provide a brief update on the approvals and course approvals from the last meeting and send an email out to the Board once he obtains the meeting minutes.

## **7. General Public Comment:**

There were no comments.

## **8. Adjournment:**

R. Genetelli asked for a motion to adjourn. J. Mondsini motioned to adjourn and W. Simone seconded the motion. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 11:41 AM.

