



STATE OF MARYLAND
BOARD OF WATERWORKS AND WASTE SYSTEMS OPERATORS
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:
Thursday, September 21, 2023 At 10:00 A.M
Virtual Video Conference Meeting via Google Hangouts

MISSION OF THE MARYLAND BOARD OF WATERWORKS & WASTE SYSTEMS OPERATORS
 The Treatment Systems that provide drinking water for our citizens and handle the wastes generated by our daily activities play an important role in protecting Public Health and the Environment of Maryland. Through the Certification Program established by State Law, the “Board of Waterworks and Waste Systems Operators” sets the education, experience and examination standards for Operators and Superintendents who work in these vital systems.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Doug Abbott	Water Supervision; Board Chair
Bill Shreve	Public at Large; Board Vice-Chair
Ed Hogan	Industrial Superintendents
Bruce Darner	Agriculture; WWOA Liaison
Connie Luffman	Wastewater Supervision
Davina Yutzy	County Government
Joe Wright	Maryland Environmental Services
Anthony Nwagwe	Maryland Department of Environment / Water Supply Division

BOARD MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Eric Dutrow	Public-At-Large
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LIAISONS, GUESTS & MDE STAFF PRESENT

Jennifer Bowman	Board Counsel
Taj Goodlow	Division Chief
Amanda Redmiles	Executive Director Board of Well Drillers
Virgiline Ongkingco	ETAD Engineer
Martin Fuhr	Board Secretary
Pam Franks	Board Staff
Victoria Arbaugh	Board Staff
Jane Pierce	MCET Liaison
Clark Howells	CWEA Liaison

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01. CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Doug Abbott called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM. Roll Call was concluded by Victoria Arbaugh, Board Staff, at 10:04 AM. The Board meeting was conducted online using Google Meet.

02. BOARD CHAIR’S COMMENT & GUEST INTRODUCTIONS

Board Chair Doug Abbott opened the meeting by thanking all in attendance and specifically thanking the Board Members for the vote of confidence in nominating and electing him as Chair at the July Meeting. He recommended that all Board Vacancies remain a staple on the meeting agenda until all seats are filled.

03. REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF PROPOSED MEETING AGENDA

Board Members reviewed the September 21, 2023 Draft Agenda. Bill Shreve moved to adopt the proposed meeting agenda with amendments. Ed Hogan seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

04. REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF DRAFT JULY 20, 2023 OPEN MEETING MINUTES

Martin Fuhr presented the proposed minutes for review. Joe Wright made a motion to approve the minutes with amendments and corrections. The motion was seconded by Bruce Darner and passed unanimously.

05. BOARD STAFF’S REPORTS:

A. Revenue & Expenditures Update

The Board Secretary advised that current revenue and expenditures are still being processed by the new Water Supply Accountant. He presented the reconciled numbers for July of 2023. He hopes to present current figures at the next Board Meeting. The Board did not have any additional questions regarding the matter.

85 **B. TRE Committee Recommendations**

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88 There was a lively discussion of the test preparation courses submitted by American Water College.
89 Anthony Nwagwe and Bill Shreve both brought up the confusing nature of the course titles. It appears to
90 infer that the State of Maryland endorses / sponsors the course which is not the case. The Board Chair
91 asked Martin to follow up with the vendor to inquire about a name change prior to approval and to take
92 out the reference to the Operator Classification and the State of Maryland since it infers endorsement by
93 MDE and the WWSO Board. Bruce Darner inquired about the status of a submission for WWOA’s
94 sponsored course entitled “Evolution of Disinfection in Water Treatment” by MCET. Jane Pierce of
95 MCET advised that it had been submitted twice. Martin Advised that course was in process and will be a
96 priority for the next Board Meeting.

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98 Doug Abbott wants to ensure that all examination prep courses are granted credit. This incentivizes
99 attendance beyond the desire to pass the course. Bill Shreve confirmed that such classes are granted credit
100 but in the case of the American Water College submission the issue is the title of class and not the fact
101 that the course is intended for exam preparation. Doug thanked Bill and emphasized that consistency is
102 essential to the integrity of the course approval process. A motion was made to adopt the amended proposal
103 of the TRE Committee pending the title corrections by Bill Shreve. The motion was seconded by Joe
104 Wright. The motion passed unanimously.

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107 **06. BOARD INITIATIVES & INQUIRIES:**

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109 **A. Virgiline Ongkingco PFAS Treatments / Ion Exchange, RO, Carbon Filtration**

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111 Virgiline Ongkingco, ETAD Engineer advised the Board that she is receiving multiple inquiries while
112 working in the field regarding what classes are required for PFAS filtration, treatment and removal. She
113 is specifically asked about the practice of granular activated carbon, reverse osmosis, and ionic exchange.
114 She wants to know the specific classification required for each classification, so she properly advises
115 operators. She also asked if there should be a new classification created to contemplate the use of the
116 referenced processes for PFAS removal and disinfection. She thinks that a Class 3 plus GAC would
117 contemplate the process.

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119 Doug Abbott noted that while Class 3 appears to contemplate the processes, it is geared towards iron
120 removal and there are no PFAS questions currently on the examination. He followed up by asking
121 Virgiline what direction she believed the Board should go in regard to the processes being used in a
122 different manner – i.e., to remove PFAS versus Iron. Bill Shreve recommended that ETAD provide a
123 summary of how they wish to regulate the PFAS removal process and noted it would most likely require
124 a regulation change. He noted that certifications are based on processes and are not contaminant driven.
125 However, he does believe that a Site-Specific classification can be used in emergent and truly unique
126 process uses.

130 Board Chair Doug Abbott redirected the conversation by expressing his interest in ensuring that new use
131 of existing technology is both effective and contemplated in the certification schematics. Joe Wright
132 agreed stating that a Site-Specific Class 5 would be the most immediate solution. Virgiline asked if a Class
133 3 plus GAC would require a regulation change. Bill Shreve responded that it would require a regulatory
134 change and advised her that it was a very timely process which included convincing the Front Office and
135 other management of the need for the change. Virgiline responded that she agreed with Joe that in the
136 immediate instance the use of the Site-Specific Class 5 would ensure proper licensure, but she would like
137 to see an amended Class 3 as a long-term solution. Bill Shreve agreed that a change to the regulations and
138 class schematics seem warranted, but he is concerned with gridlock while waiting for a change to be
139 finalized. Doug thanked Virgiline for bringing the issue to the attention of the WWSO Board and asked
140 her to please come to any future meetings and contribute her viewpoint.

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142 **B. Intra Agency Agreement Signed with MCET / CSM**
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144 An agreement was made between MCET / CSM and MDE to streamline the bid process. The Board
145 concurred this was good news and would prevent delays caused by bidding.

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147 **C. Proposed Changes to WWSO Board Fees**
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149 The Board Secretary presented the fee changes being proposed by Deputy Program Director Dee Settar
150 as a regulatory change. The Board members expressed concerns about timing as a response must be
151 forwarded to Dee by no later than 10/20/2023. Board Counsel asked the Board to wait until a closed
152 meeting to discuss the proposed regulation changes. The Board will review and be prepared to discuss in
153 the closed meeting to be held on 10/19/2023. Per Doug Abbott's request Martin will confirm whether
154 there is any wiggle room with Dee's deadline. Jenn Bowman will review all of the proposed regulation
155 changes and provide advice the Martin will package all information to be addressed at the same time.

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157 **D. Application Turn Around Times**
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159 Board members met with the Board Secretary and Division Chief Taj Goodlow in regard to concerns
160 about processing delays. They asked to be provided with a copy of the monthly report derived from the
161 Operator's Database. Victoria Arbaugh advised the Board of extreme and ongoing database failures and
162 print function failures including a month-long, total computer failure and two months without print
163 functions. Pamela Franks explained that there is an ongoing issue with payments. Specifically, many
164 systems send in checks without applications and applications without checks, which delays all application
165 processing.

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167 Ed Hogan acknowledged the issue and recommended that the Board focus on implementing the new
168 database platform to remedy the issues. Doug Abbott asked Taj for input and Taj recommended that
169 another meeting be held with the Board Secretary so more detail could be provided. Bill Shreve advised
170 that he was not aware of any issues with the database and understood the long-standing payment issues.
171 He recommended an email blast be sent to the regulated community advising of delays and requesting
172 cooperation with recommendations to ensure a smooth process.

175 Pam Franks asked that the blast request no inquiries on application status until the checks had, at least,
176 cleared and that a point person from each system make contact instead of having multiple people request
177 the same information on a weekly basis. Victoria Arbaugh expressed concerns about time consuming,
178 special accommodations being provided for struggling systems such as Baltimore City - which sends in
179 long lists of status requests to come into compliance with all regulations.

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181 Doug closed the discussion and advised that the Board wants to help, and the report will now be reviewed
182 on a quarterly basis by a new subcommittee that was created to address the matter. Victoria Arbaugh
183 recommended that the Board Secretary report to the subcommittee on the status of ongoing software
184 failures and updates that render the database inaccessible to Board Staff and occur at least one day a week.
185 Board counsel cautioned that only 4 members can sit on the committee or else the meeting would
186 constitute a Board Meeting. Victoria and Pam would like to attend meetings and give input. Bruce filed a
187 motion to create the committee and then determine the 4 Board Members who would participate. Joe
188 seconded the motion. The motion passed.

189 190 **E. Email Blast to Operators**

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192 Bill Shreve recommended an email blast explaining how to complete the applications properly, the delay
193 that results from submitting incomplete applications, and managing expectations regarding processing
194 times. Ed Hogan noted that was a great idea. Bill Shreve emphasized that the email be informative and
195 not adversarial in tone. The email blast will be reviewed and approved by the Application Turn Around
196 Subcommittee.

197 198 **F. Complaint / Request to Apply Experience under Wastewater 5 OIT to Industrial 5 OIT**

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200 It was determined upon advice of Board Counsel that this matter be addressed in closed session.

201 202 **G. WWSO Board Marijuana Statement**

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204 Martin presented the revised language for the “use of marijuana statement.” The Board agreed to remove
205 all references to medical marijuana. A motion to approve the updated statement was made by Ed Hogan
206 the motion was seconded by Bill Shreve. The motion passed unanimously.

207 208 209 **07. REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED**

210 211 **A. Christopher Bellemyer Substitution of Education for Experience**

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213 Mr. Bellmyer is currently employed by Maryland Environmental Service. He is asking for education credit
214 toward his wastewater treatment 5 certification. It was recommended that he be awarded one year of credit
215 toward his Wastewater 5 certification, making him eligible on October 1, 2024. A motion to adopt Board
216 Staff recommendation was made by Ed Hogan. The motion was seconded by Bruce Darner. The motion
217 passed with Joe Wright abstaining.

218 219 **B. Heather Kerr Substitution of Education for Experience**

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221 Ms. Kerr is employed at the Charlotte Hall Veterans Home. She is requesting education substitution
222 toward her Water Treatment Class 1 Certification. Ms. Kerr will qualify for full certification on November
223 1. Based on her transcripts, it is recommended that she be awarded full certification immediately. A motion
224 was made by Ed Hogan to adopt the recommendation of Board Staff. The motion was seconded by Ed
225 Hogan. The motion passed.
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227 **C. Brent Murphy Substitution of Education for Experience**
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229 Mr. Murphy is currently employed by the Charles County Government. He is requesting Education
230 Substitution for his Operator Class 5A Wastewater Treatment certification. It is recommended he be
231 awarded 12 months of credit toward his Wastewater 5A certification, making him eligible for full
232 certification on January 1, 2024. A motion was made by Ed Hogan to adopt the recommendation of Board
233 Staff. The motion was seconded by Joe Wright. The motion passed.
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235 **D. Robert Norwood Substitution of Education for Experience**
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237 Mr. Norwood is currently employed with the Town of Walkersville. He is requesting Education
238 Substitution for his Operator Class 4 Water Treatment certification. It is recommended he be awarded 5
239 months of credit toward his Water 4 certification, making him eligible for full certification immediately.
240 A motion was made by Bruce Darner to adopt the recommendation of Board Staff. The motion was
241 seconded by Joe Wright. The motion passed.
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244 **08. OLD BUSINESS**
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246 **A. WPI / ABC Exam Subcommittee**
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248 The exam committee had expressed concerns over the fact that there are 40 questions which need to be
249 replaced. Board Chair, Doug Abbott asked Martin to send a request to the vendor for options. Bill Shreve
250 recommended sending a full spreadsheet as opposed to breaking down the questions into categories.
251 Martin will send the information and request that the vendor respond by no later than 11/8/2023.
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254 **11. DISCUSSION WITH BOARD LIAISONS AND GUESTS**
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257 **Bruce Darner (WWOA)** – There was no main body meeting yesterday. They will be meeting in October,
258 and he will provide an update at that time. Doug Abbott added that the Tri-Con was great, and he looked
259 forward to attending next year.
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261 **Jane Pierce (MCET)** – They are still running the EARN Program and have partnered with WSSC which
262 will be holding classes by MCET.
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265 **12. BOARD VOTE TO MOVE INTO CLOSED SESSION**

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267 Pursuant to General Provisions Article (“GP”) § 3-305(b), on a motion made by Bill Shreve and seconded
268 by Ed Hogan, the following Board members voted in favor to move into closed session on January 20,
269 2023 at 12:15 PM via Google Meet video/ teleconference for the purpose of complying with certain
270 provisions of the Open Meetings Act: Vice-Chairman Bill Shreve, Ed Hogan, Bruce Darner, Connie
271 Luffman, Anthony Nwagwe, Joe Wright and Davina Yutzy. Board Chair Doug Abbott abstained. The
272 motion carried.
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275 **13. ADJOURNMENT**

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277 Ed Hogan moved to adjourn the open meeting at 12:17 PM and the motion was second by Bruce Darner.
278 The next meeting will be held on **October 19, 2023 Video Conference Meeting held via Google Meet.**
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281 **CALL TO ORDER AND PURPOSE OF CLOSED MEETING**

282 With a quorum present, Board Chairman Doug Abbott called the meeting of the closed session to order at
283 11:50 AM to perform administrative functions, pursuant to the following provisions of GP § 3-305(b):
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285 GP § 3-305(b)(2) - To protect the privacy or reputation of individuals concerning a matter not related to
286 public business

287 GP § 3-305(b)(7) - To consult with Board Counsel to obtain legal advice
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289 During the closed meeting, the following newly elected Board members were present: Chairman Doug
290 Abbott, Vice-Chairman Bill Shreve, Ed Hogan, Bruce Darner, Connie Luffman, Anthony Nwagwe, Joe
291 Wright and Davina Yutzy. The following MDE staff were also present during the closed meeting: Jenn
292 Bowman, Virgiline Ongkingco, Martin Fuhr, Pam Franks and Victoria Arbaugh.
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295 **TOPICS DISCUSSED DURING CLOSED MEETING**

296 Board Members discussed the following items: Operator Complaint / Petition to have certificate converted
297 from Wastewater 5 to Industrial Wastewater 5 and a Complaint Received by ETAD regarding a Water
298 Operator.