



1 **MEETING OF THE UTILITY OPERATOR CERTIFICATION ADVISORY BOARD**
2 **THURSDAY September 22, 2022**
3 **9:00 A.M.**
4 **HELD VIRTUALLY VIA CISCO WEBEX MEETING**

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6 **AGENDA ITEM 1. ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS**

7 **Members present:** Cathie Eisen, Chair
8 Joe Bailey, Vice Chair
9 Ivan (Michael) Abell
10 Maria Gilvarry
11 Sydney Hoke
12 Bobby Towle
13 Filiberto Aguirre
14 Dale Graham

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17 **Absent:** Rick Mitchel

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19 **Guests:** Joe Martinez, NMED-DWB Chief
20 Jill Turner, NMED-DWB SWIG Manager
21 Eric Hall, NMED-DWB Manager
22 Anita Tavasci, NMED-DWB UOCP
23 Nile Carver, NMED-DWB UOCP
24 Avery Young, NMED-GWQB
25 Susan Lucas-Kamat, NMED-SWQB Point Source Regulation
26 Jack Richardson, Los Alamos County
27 Vince Corona, Los Alamos County
28 David Gomez, Los Alamos County
29 Jonathan Holmes, Alamogordo Area Water Hauler
30 Patty Hill, Excel Energy
31 Michael-Mark, Timberon Water and Sanitation District
32 Cherie
33 Patrick Jaramillo

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35 **ACTION:** Roll was called, a quorum was present
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37 **AGENDA ITEM 2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL: MEETING AGENDA**

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39 **DISCUSSION:** Joe Bailey asked the Board if anyone found any corrections of the meeting agenda.

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41 **ACTION:** Member Gilvarry made the motion to accept the agenda as presented. Member Hoke
42 seconded the motion. The motion carries unanimously.
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44 **AGENDA ITEM 3. REVIEW AND APPROVAL: JUNE 9, 2022 MEETING MINUTES**

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46 **DISCUSSION:** Vice Chair Bailey asked the Board members if they have had a chance to review the
47 minutes and if they have any comments on them.
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49 **ACTION:** Member Towle made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Member Hoke seconded
50 the motion. A unanimous voice vote, none opposed. The motion passed.

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AGENDA ITEM 4. CERTIFIED POOL OPERATOR EXPERIENCE FOR WATER SUPPLY 2 EXAM

DISCUSSION: Eric Hall introduced Vince Corona who had applied for a Water Supply 2 exam with 2 years of Certified Pool Operator, (CPO), experience. Mr. Corona stated that he understands the standard is to have drinking water experience to apply for an exam. He went on to discuss the similarities of duties to be a CPO and water supply. Jack Richardson, Deputy Manager for Gas, Water and Sewer of Los Alamos County Department of Public Utilities, with a population of about 20,000 people, in charge of field operations and maintenance. Los Alamos County also sells wholesale water to Los Alamos National Laboratory. Mr. Richardson had been with the county for 12 years and he had graduated from NM State in 1980 with a degree in Civil Engineering and had been involved with the water and wastewater field his entire career. Mr. Richardson said that Vincent displays a high level of competence with his level of knowledge in the field. Mr. Richardson stated that he and David Gomez were here to speak on behalf of Vincent to convince the Board that Vincent has the level of experience to hopefully qualify him to be approved for the Water level 2 exam. David Gomez, Water Systems Superintendent for Los Alamos County and had been with the county for 21 years, had been the President for the New Mexico Water and Wastewater Association, (NMWWA), and had provided trainings for the NMWWA. Mr. Gomez stated that it is rare to see someone like Mr. Corona with the drive and desire to learn. Mr. Gomez went on to mention that Mr. Corona displays that he is competent in the potable water field. Mr. Gomez stated that he is aware of the regulation's, (NMAC 20.7.4), requirements but with retirements coming up for the county they would like to see Vincent and other operators moving upward in certification levels. Mr. Richardson stated that he is not requesting Mr. Corona be given the level 2 but be allowed to take the exam for certification. Mr. Richardson requested for any comments or questions from the Board or staff and thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak. Vice Chair Bailey asked the Board members if they have any comments. Chair Eisen stated that she understands the concerns and that this individual does have similar experience but if an exception is made for one individual then exceptions will have to be made for all persons with similar experience. Chair Eisen went on to say that the regulations are fairly clear of experience requirements and it is up to the systems to make the exception to provide the person with the time to gain the experience. Mr. Richardson said that the regulations speaks of relevant experience and feels that is what Mr. Corona has is consistent relevant experience as opposed to what is needed for the potable side. Chair Eisen stated that the Board has had other applicants before with a request of CPO experience, it can be seen in previous Board minutes that they were rejected with the same qualifications. Mr. Richardson suggested to review the regulations for future revisions to allow for this exception. Mr. Hall stated that swimming pool is completely different than dealing with potable drinking water. Mr. Hall asked how much experience Mr. Corona has accrued in his current position. Mr. Gomez answered just under seven months. Mr. Corona stated six and one-half months. Member Aguirre wanted to share the Dona Ana Community College Water Technologies degreed program allows to test for a level two certification once six months of hands-on internship in the distribution and potable production systems are completed. Member Gilvarry stated that an operator who had passed a water level 2 certification are authorized to run a chemical addition plant, odor and taste control and aeration for a population of 501 to 5,000. She went on to say a person that passes that exam has the backing of the State of New Mexico that they are ready to be in charge of a system of that size and treatment types. Member Abell gave the question to Mr. Corona; what is it that you want the Board to forgive? Do you want the Board to accept the 2 years 2 months working for Hilton Head as a CPO to apply as experience or the seven months of working with Los Alamos county to allow you to test? Mr. Corona responded that he would like all of the experience to apply towards potable water experience. He went on to say that CPO and potable

98 water experience are similar with safety standards for treatment and testing. Member Abell replied
99 that he has operators working for him that have CPO certification that are operating splash pads, but he
100 would not approve of one of them to take a water level 2 test even with seven years' experience.
101 Member Abell gave his opinion that he recognizes the experience Mr. Corona has working for Hilton
102 Head since he himself had pool experience. When he had applied for a certification exam in 1993 he
103 was denied the opportunity to test based on that. Member Abell commented that he feels Mr. Corona's
104 experience as a CPO with the seven months of experience gained working for Los Alamos county, he
105 would accept Mr. Corona testing for a level one certification based on that. Member Abell deferred
106 back to the Board for their comments. Member Gilvarry concurred with Member Abell that partial
107 credit be allowed for experience to test for a level one. She went on to say it would place Mr. Corona
108 closer to testing for his level two certification. Her concern is that the level two would allow for running
109 a level two plant. Chair Eisen has a concern that if the Board makes an exception for anyone then that
110 exception will have to accept exceptions for even someone with an Engineering degree. Mr. Richardson
111 commented in summary that he appreciates the discussion. He went on to accept the offer for Vincent
112 Corona to take the level 1 exam and thanked the Board for their time.

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114 **ACTION:** Vice Chair Bailey asked the Board if there is a motion on this item. Member Gilvarry made a
115 motion to not accept the full 2-years of experience but to approve for 6 months experience on Vince
116 Corona's CPO experience and allow him to test for his level one. Member Towle seconded the motion.
117 Vice Chair Bailey took a voice vote in favor. Four members voted in favor. Vice Chair Bailey then asked
118 if any opposed, no opposition was presented. The motion carries. Member Gilvarry stated that this will
119 need to go into the record showing that this type of experience would be limited towards 6 months of
120 experience and for a level one exam and nothing higher. David Gomez expressed his appreciation the
121 Board took the time to discuss this. Member Gilvarry spoke directly to Vince that this is a very serious
122 field and we do have the health and safety of the entire state of New Mexico. She went on to say that
123 drinking water is the lifeblood for a lot of people, either it be for a dialysis system, a hospital to drinking
124 water. It is extremely critical that this is taken seriously and asked him to become part of helping us to
125 move forward. Member Gilvarry further stated that all systems are under-staffed but we cannot make a
126 compromise to get additional operators on-board. Vince Corona said that he 100% agree, he will take
127 this very seriously and thanked the Board for taking the time to discuss this item. Vice Chair Bailey
128 thanked Vincent, hopes he will stay with his progression in this career and that he will make a great
129 operator.

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131 **AGENDA ITEM 5: NEW MEXICO WATER AND WASTEWATER ASSOCIATION**

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133 **DISCUSSION:** Mr. Hall stated that Craig Byers could not make it today and that there is no report.

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135 **AGENDA ITEM 6: DRINKING WATER BUREAU UPDATE**

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137 **DISCUSSION:** Jill Turner stated that the Drinking Water Bureau is still working on the NMAC 20.7.4
138 Utility Operator Certification regulation changes. Joe Martinez, herself and Eric Hall have been working
139 together on revisions, making some good progress and had met with the attorney. Within the next few
140 months the Drinking Water Bureau should be able to have the changes completed and begin the process
141 of Stakeholder meetings. Ms. Turner went on to state that the Operator-In-Training, (OIT), is one of the
142 more important changes to get into place. She went on to state that within the next few months the
143 UOCP will be replacing their outdated operator database with a certification management system. This
144 new system has many great features. Member Abell asked Jill about the unfunded mandate on lead

145 service lines due in 2024. Jill said that Joe Martinez, Drinking Water Bureau Chief or Tanya Trujillo,
146 Drinking Water Bureau, Compliance group would be better informed to answer any questions. Member
147 Gilvarry stated that the Environment Quality Association with Joe Martinez and Tanya Trujillo can
148 answer questions and Tanya is very helpful and knowledgeable on the topic.
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150 **AGENDA ITEM 7: SURFACE WATER QUALITY BUREAU, POINT SOURCE POLLUTION PROGRAM**

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152 **DISCUSSION:** Susan Lucas-Kamat stated that their program is working on a state permitting program
153 to develop discharge rules for surface water of the state.
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155 **AGENDA ITEM 8: GROUND WATER QUALITY BUREAU, DOMESTIC WASTE TEAM UPDATE**

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157 **DISCUSSION:** Avery Young stated that on Tuesday the Ground Water Quality Bureau hosted a
158 workshop for surface disposal site operators that includes disposal of sludge, septage, grease,
159 hydrocarbon contaminated soil and car wash waste. They had 25 attendees. A portion of the course
160 gave operators training credits for the topics applicable to water and wastewater. They will be hosting
161 another workshop in Las Cruces on October 12th. If anyone is interested to please reach-out to her.
162 Member Gilvarry said that it was a very good training and suggested that Robert George be allowed
163 more time for his portion of the workshop. Ms. Young replied the trick was balancing water and
164 wastewater operators versus the surface disposal of sludge in general. They will give him more time in
165 Las Cruces. They have re-worked the agenda and the thing that is being considered is providing just a
166 503 class, general sludge disposal. She went on to state that a lot of times when they do a site visit they
167 have noticed sludge that has been on-site for 20 years and no one has any idea the process to dispose of
168 it. Member Gilvarry said that she really enjoyed the class, it was very informative, and some of her
169 questions were answered for ash and debris she has to deal with.
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171 **AGENDA ITEM 9: NEW MEXICO UTILITY OPERATOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM UPDATES**

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173 **DISCUSSION:** Eric Hall was excited to announce that the Program had received an attorney that is
174 anxious to work together. The attorney's name is Jen Olsen and Mr. Hall feels that Jen will be very
175 helpful getting new Board members approved followed by getting regulation revisions started. Mr. Hall
176 stated that the certification exams pass-ratio is at 41% which is about the national average as compared
177 to the 22% to 23% when we first started the computer-based testing. Mr. Hall said a change we are
178 making for the exams is we had previously allowed 3 months to schedule and take the exams and now
179 we are going to a 6-month timeframe. Mr. Hall announced that Kendall Crowe had gotten down to
180 zero-applications that are now pending. This allows for a 2 to 3 week turn-around from when we
181 receive an application to when the operator can schedule to take their exam as opposed to the previous
182 1 to 4 month delay. Mr. Hall expressed his appreciation towards Jill Turner for her efforts acquiring the
183 new operator database.
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185 **AGENDA ITEM 10: OTHER BUSINESS INCLUDING THE NEXT MEETING DATE**

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187 **DISCUSSION:** Vice Chair Bailey asked if there was any other business. No comments were made. Vice
188 Chair Bailey asked Mr. Hall when the next meeting of the Advisory Board should be held. He also asked
189 Mr. Hall if the next meeting will be before the Water Quality Control Commission or after. Mr. Hall
190 replied that we do not currently know when we are going to go before the Commission. Mr. Hall stated
191 that the next Board meeting should be in early November to avoid the holidays. Vice Chair Bailey

192 suggested November 3rd or 10th. Mr. Hall asked the Board if November 10th would work for all
193 members. All members present agreed that November 10th would work well. Vice Chair Bailey stated
194 that tentatively November 10, 2022 would be the next regularly scheduled meeting. Chair Eisen asked if
195 the members from Timberon were still present in the meeting. Vice Chair Bailey replied that it looks like
196 they had left and asked if there were any additional other business to discuss. There were no
197 comments.

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199 **AGENDA ITEM 11: ADJOURNMENT AND ROLL CALL**

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201 **DISCUSSION:** Vice Chair Bailey asked for a motion to adjourn.

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203 **ACTION:** Member Hoke made a motion to adjourn. Member Towle seconded the motion. Vice Chair
204 Bailey proceeded to do roll call. Richard Graham, Yes. Sydney Hoke, Yes. Bobby Towle, Yes. Maria
205 Gilvary, Yes. Rick Mitchell, absent. Filiberto Aguirre, Jr., yes. Ivan Abell, Yes. Joe Bailey, Yes. The
206 meeting adjourned at 10:00am on Thursday September 22, 2022.