

## **North Dakota Operator Certification Advisory Committee**

**October 18, 2023**

### **Minutes**

The 23rd Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Operator Certification Advisory Committee was held at the North Dakota Water and Pollution Control Conference. The meeting was conducted October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The meeting was called to order by James Kershaw, Previous Committee Chair at 9:00am. Members in attendance were:

Daniel Hanson, City of Grand Forks, representing large system water distribution and/or wastewater collection operators.

Jake Schafer, Environmental Scientist, representing the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality.

Bruce Hirschert, City of New Rockford, representing small system water distribution and/or wastewater collection operators.

Kollin Syverson, Branch Manager, Hawkins, Inc., representing Technical Assistance providers.

James Kershaw, Water Plant Superintendent, City of Bismarck, representing large system water treatment and/or wastewater treatment operators.

Chuck Mischel, NDRWSA, representing the NDWPCC.

Also in attendance were the following guests:

Shawn Heinle, NDDEQ

Greg Wavra, NDDEQ

David Bruschwein, NDDEQ

Bryce Peters, NDDEQ

Chair Kershaw called for a motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes from the October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022 committee meeting. Mr. Hirschert motioned to dispense with the reading of the minutes. Mr. Schafer seconded. Motion carried.

Mr. Kershaw called for any old business.

Hearing no old business, Mr. Kershaw moved on to new business. Mr. Kershaw discussed the replacement of vacant and expiring committee positions.

Bryce Peters was nominated to represent the NDWPCC. Mr. Schafer nominated; Mr. Syverson seconded. Motion carried.

John "Fred" Goetz was nominated for a second term to represent Utility Managers. Mr. Hirschert nominated; Mr. Hanson seconded. Motion carried.

Jacob Schafer was nominated for a second term to represent NDDEQ. Mr. Hirschert nominated; Mr. Hanson seconded. Motion carried.

Mr. Heinle presented the group with updates on the NDDEQ operator testing schedule as well as the testing sessions from September and the upcoming sessions in October.

Mr. Heinle discussed billing confusion with the new Op-Cert Portal. Pop-up blockers seemed to cause some invoice issues. Mr. Heinle also explained that payments could not be made until July 1<sup>st</sup> each year due to the state fiscal year.

Mr. Hanson raised a question about potential traveling exam opportunities. Mr. Bruschein noted that NDDEQ was in the process of planning some traveling examination dates as a trial. Mr. Hanson also raised a question on test review. Mr. Heinle addressed previous instances of cheating as well as possible practice test creation in partnership with Bismarck State College.

Mr. Heinle discussed the new Op-Cert Portal and the possibility of confirmation emails for system managers on operator actions. Mr. Heinle also clarified that continuing education credits run from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> on a rolling 3-year cycle. Mr. Heinle further clarified that Bismarck State College does offer online operator trainings, but they are only geared towards new operators.

Mr. Heinle discussed a new format for Operator Spring Training to occur in April and May of 2024 at the Bismarck Heritage Center. Water training will occur April 29 – May 1. Wastewater training will occur May 6 – May 8.

The final item of new business was the selection of a new committee Chair and Chair-Elect due to the resignation of the previous Chair-Elect. Mr. Syverson nominated Mr. Mischel as Chair. Mr. Schafer seconded. A unanimous vote followed, electing Mr. Chuck Mischel as new Chair. Mr. Hirschert nominated Mr. Hanson as Chair-Elect. Mr. Syverson seconded. A unanimous vote followed, electing Mr. Daniel Hanson as new Chair-Elect.

Mr. Mischel as the new committee chair, hearing no further new business, called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Hirschert motioned to adjourn. Mr. Peters seconded. The meeting adjourned at 10:00am.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jake Schafer  
Secretary