

**MINUTES**  
**STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY BOARD**  
FOREST PARK, GA  
OCTOBER 13, 2004

Present were Stakeholder Advisory Board members Mark Byrd, Alice Champagne, Jim Hamilton (Chair), JoAnn Macrina, James Magnus, Robert Ringer, Karim Shahlaee, Gregory Teague, Aaron Varner, Burns Wetherington and Connie Wiggins. Member Doug Easter was not in attendance. Also present was Soil and Water Commission employees David Bennett (Executive Director) and Michaelyn Rozar. Interested parties in attendance included Mark Hornbuckle (HBTC Training), Scott Brumbelow (Georgia Utility Contractors Association), Seth Yurman (Georgia Water and Pollution Control Association), Don Christy (Association of County Commissioners of Georgia), Dennis Rice (Georgia DOT), Laura Beall (Council for Quality Growth) and Bettee Sleeth (Homebuilders of Georgia). Mr. Hamilton opened the meeting by welcoming board members and guests and recommended that the Board begin with the first agenda item.

Agenda Items

**1. Schedule of future meetings.**

The next meeting of the SAB will be held Wednesday, October 27, 2004 at the Georgia Engineering Center located in the Equitable Building in Atlanta. The November 3, 2004 meeting will be hosted by EPD at Tradeport in the EPD Training Room. Ms. Wiggins offered to host the November 17, 2004 meeting. It will be held at the 1818 Club of the Gwinnett County Chamber of Commerce at 12 Noon. Lunch will be provided.

**2. Review and approve October 1, 2004 meeting minutes.**

On a motion by Mr. Teague and seconded by Dr. Shahlaee, the minutes of the October 1, 2004 SAB meeting were approved.

**3. Discuss scheduled meeting with Dr. Couch**

A meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 14, 2004 with Dr. Carol Couch, Director of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division. Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Bennett and Brent Dykes (SWCC) will attend. Mr. Hamilton reviewed the objectives and highlighted the following points of discussion:

- Term "all persons" and its interpretation and application on-site.
- Appointment of the 16-member technical advisory board and how the technical board might work in cooperation with the education program.

Mr. Hamilton offered to take notes to be distributed to SAB members. Ms. Wiggins asked if there would be any merit checking back with Dr. Couch and the technical advisory committee in 18-24 months and not just make the meeting a one time event. Mr. Hamilton agreed and added the the SAB will continue to meet with the EPD and Commission to look for improvements to the certification program.

#### **4. Review of timeline.**

Mr. Hamilton briefly reviewed the Board's short-term timeline for approval of the Rules and Regulations. He commented that while the SAB is behind schedule it is the Board's goal to get the Rules right. He added that while a few extra weeks may be needed the Board still must be timely in approving the Rules.

#### **5. Proposed issues for vote.**

Mr. Hamilton reviewed the document "Proposed Issues for Vote" that had been distributed to Board members prior to the meeting (this document is attached to the minutes). He asked each member present to give input on the proposed issues and indicate if they were ready to vote on the proposed issues.

Mr. Wetherington offered the following comments.

Mr. Wetherington indicated he was fine with everything regarding the Level IA certification except requiring instructors to notify the SWCC 30 days prior to holding a course. He commented that emerging projects would require immediate training opportunities and indicated that 7 days would be more appropriate. Mr. Bennett commented that the SWCC would need to know the date of the course and the number in attendance and seven days is not sufficient to generate tests and activate a tracking system. Mr. Wetherington indicated he is in agreement with the statement regarding Level IB certification. He questioned if Engineers-In-Training (EITs) would be able to sit for the exam. The initial indication of the Board was yes. Mr. Wetherington stated that proctoring would be dependant on the determined timeline for scheduling courses for emergent situations. He supported open book testing and suggested that tests be graded on-site.

Mr. Thompson indicated he was in favor of voting and moving on. He expressed concern over the experience requirements for the Level IB and II courses but indicated that it was not enough to delay voting. He agreed with the statement relating to proctoring but was concerned about offering an open book test and indicated he was still open to discussion on the subject.

Mr. Ringer agreed with Mr. Thompson that the group needed to vote on the issues. In regards to the Level IB seminar, he indicated that 60-day requirement

is workable for EPD as long as newly hired inspectors from cities and counties have access to contacts such as the Commission and material such as the Green Book to review during that 60-day period. Mr. Ringer expressed concern regarding the statement on proctoring and added that it would make it more difficult to implement testing and the group may want to discuss random audits. He stated that he would like to see the Level IA and IB exams in an open-book format and a closed-book exam for Level II.

Ms. Macrina began her comments by stating that a consensus among the Board may be more important than a majority vote. She indicated that she was fine with the statement regarding the Level IA seminar but would like to see 90-days experience for Level IB participants. She also stated that initially she had been in favor of 6-months experience for inspectors so she felt that 90-days would be a good compromise. Ms. Macrina also asked that a definition of experience be included in the rules. Regarding the statement on Level II training, she requested more consideration be given to the disparities between a plan reviewer and designer especially relating to experience and education requirements. Ms. Macrina recommended splitting the Level II seminar into Level IIA and IIB seminars. She agreed with the statement relating to proctoring and was in favor of open book exams but was open to discussing closed-book exams for Level IB and Level II training. She also commented on the importance of being able to use the manual instead of memorizing details.

Mr. Magnus began his comments regarding the Level IA seminar by saying he was fine with the 30-day notification requirements but would prefer to see a 14-day notification period. Mr. Magnus questioned whether individuals other than city and county inspectors would be able to participate in the Level IB seminar. The Board discussed the issue in detail. Mr. Bennett remarked that the market will drive registration and that it would be unwise to dictate who could or could not take the seminar arbitrarily. He also stated that the law includes non-regulatory inspectors in the description of the Level IB seminar. Mr. Hamilton added the geotechnical firms doing weekly inspections may want their employees to receive the Level IB training. Ms. Champagne commented that those performing self-inspections might want to attend the Level IB seminar to be prepared for LIA inspectors. Mr. Teague emphasized the importance of giving specific job titles with descriptions in materials describing the different levels of training.

Mr. Magnus continued his earlier comments by asking if only licensed professionals receive Level II certification. Mr. Bennett commented that two different groups of people would be involved in Level II training, those who design plans and those who review plans. He added that the educational levels and experience differences between these groups could be drastic. Mr. Bennett advocated splitting the Level II training into Level IIA and Level IIB seminars. Mr. Magnus disagreed, stating that it would need to be the same course so plan

reviewers would hear the same message as plan preparers. He added that he could see the point of having two courses.

Mr. Teague agreed with the idea of two separate Level II training courses stating that they would offer the same message just different emphasis. He advocated allowing individuals other than licensed professionals such as EITs and staff engineers sit for the Level II exam. Mr. Hamilton stated that taking into consideration input received from the Commission and other engineers it would be beneficial for reviewers and designer to be in the same course. He cautioned against having reviewers that do not know about the process involved in designing a plan and are only aware of checklist requirements. He added that it would be beneficial if EITs could take the test. The Board discussed the merits of EITs and staff engineers sitting for the Level II exam. Mr. Teague suggested allowing anyone to take the course but only testing licensed professionals. Mr. Bennett continued the discussion by suggesting that individuals could take the course and then petition to take the exam once they are licensed.

Ms. Wiggins recommended dividing the Level II training into two tracks rather than two entirely separate courses. The tracks might include some common sessions as well as separate sessions regarding specific responsibilities. She also expressed concern about certifying an individual who can't legally sign/seal a plan. Ms. Macrina added that two separate Level II courses would add additional work to the Commission's responsibilities. She also commented that design professionals from the specific disciplines would need to be certified as soon as possible and there would not be space for non-design professionals in the classes. Discussion regarding Level II training continued.

Mr. Magnus continued his earlier comments. Regarding proctoring, he stated that if instructors can be trusted to teach material they should be trusted to proctor their own exams. He suggested open book testing for Level II training and closed book testing for Levels IA and IB to ensure that participants have retained what they have heard.

Mr. Teague began his comments by agreeing with other Board members that a vote should be taken as soon as possible. Regarding Level IA training, Mr. Teague recommended all applications run through the Commission first. He opposed any experience requirements for Level IB training and agreed with splitting Level II training into Level IA and Level IB. He recommended allowing individuals access to training material as soon as possible. Mr. Teague was in favor of allowing instructors to proctor their own exams due to logistical issues. He was also in favor of open book testing stating that it is more important for individuals to be able to use the resources available to them than to memorize facts. Mr. Teague stated the purpose of the certification program was to ensure that individuals knew how to do their job not certify that they were good inspectors.

Ms. Wiggins agreed that the Board should vote on the key issues in question as soon as possible. She commented that was fine with the requirements for IA as long as a phrase regarding estimated head count is added stating that it would be too burdensome for an instructor to inform the Commission of the maximum number of individuals expected to attend a course. Regarding Level IB training, Ms. Wiggins stated that she hopes inspectors are doing a good job and would like to see a 90-day experience requirement but added she can live with the 60-day stipulation. She again advocated a two track system for Level II training citing the different educational requirements and experiences of the two groups. Ms. Wiggins commented that proctoring all exams could be a logistical problem and suggested random audits for accountability. She also supported a combination of open and closed book testing. Ms. Wiggins suggested defining the word "experience" to clarify its usage in the Rules and Ms. Macrina agreed.

Mr. Byrd advocated voting during the meeting. He stated that although he preferred a 7-14 day period for the Level IA training he could live with the 30-day notification requirements. He also agreed with a 60-day experience requirement for Level IB training and splitting Level II training into two separate courses. Mr. Byrd recommended allowing instructors to proctor exams and preferred open book testing and agreed with other members that tests should be graded the same day that they are given.

Ms. Champagne began her comments by stating she would accept the Level IA statement but added that she would like to see an experience requirement for individuals taking the Level IA course. She also advocated a 6-month experience requirement for Level IB participants and agreed with Ms. Macrina and Ms. Wiggins that a definition of experience needs to be added to the Rules. Ms. Champagne also agreed with separating the Level II class into sections for plan reviewers and plan designers and agreed with the proctoring statement. Regarding exams, Ms. Champagne agreed with Mr. Magnus endorsing a closed book exam for Level IA certification and agreed with open book testing for Level IB and Level II certification. Ms. Champagne added that she would like to see consensus among the SAB members but knew that members would never fully agree on details and advocated a vote. She stated that members should support the final product regardless of how they voted on specific issues.

Dr. Shahlaee agreed with the statements up for vote regarding Level IA and IB certification. He also agreed with separating Level II training into two separate sections. He agreed with open book testing but suggested that exams be timed to prevent individuals from finding each individual answer in provided materials and stated that he saw no way logistically to grade tests on-site. Dr. Shahlaee also stated that it should be the responsibility of the Commission to organize proctoring commenting that the Commission could decide on using employees or a pool of proctors to offer consistent and fair test monitoring.

Mr. Varner agreed with the statement up for vote regarding Level IA certification and advocated a more stringent experience requirement for Level IB certification but stated he would be willing to compromise and agree with the statement as written. He also agreed with separating Level II training into two separate sections. Mr. Varner agreed with Dr. Shahlaee regarding proctoring and suggested that the Commission be allowed to decide on the best course of action. He was in favor of closed book testing but stated he would like to see not only written questions but on-site examples. Ms. Macrina agreed with the necessity of on-site examples and suggested using photos. Ms. Wiggins also agreed. Mr. Varner stated that he respectfully disagreed with Mr. Teague regarding the purpose of the certification program. He commented that the purpose of the program was to protect the water resources of Georgia by creating a comprehensive education program.

Mr. Hamilton began his comments by stating that he was concerned about the burden of responsibility the Commission had been tasked with in the new certification program. He listed these responsibilities including reviewing and responding to applications, developing, distributing and grading tests, maintaining records, conducting courses, etc. Ms. Champagne asked that this list of responsibilities be shared during the meeting with Dr. Couch. Mr. Bennett stated that he had no intention of holding up training adding that the Commission was interested in a quality product but that he was open to suggestions regarding proctoring. The Board continued to discuss the proctoring issue and Ms. Macrina suggested a set fee for proctors and that the pool not be tied to the specific course. Mr. Hamilton asked if the Commission would charge for its employees to proctor exams. Mr. Bennett stated that the Commission could offer a course in proctoring and approved proctors could charge a fee as they see fit. The Commission will charge enough for courses to cover costs and not make money. He added that other groups would set their own fees and recognized that third-parties would be able to offer training on Saturdays and holidays. He stated that the Commission would offer courses but could not train everyone in the state. Dr. Shahlaee suggested hiring a testing/consulting firm with resources and center around the state. The Board continued to discuss the issue.

Mr. Hamilton continued his statements by agreeing with other members that instructors would need to inform the Commission of a maximum number expected to attend the course. He also supported a 90-day experience requirement for Level IB training participants. While he supported the idea of splitting the Level II training into two separate parts, he also suggested that individuals such as EITs be given a certificate of completion and then be able to test later. Mr. Hamilton agreed with the statement regarding proctoring and supported a combination of open and closed book testing.

At this time, Mr. Hamilton requested input from other interested parties in attendance. He recognized Mark Hornbuckle (HBTraining). Mr. Hornbuckle indicated he had a problem with the 30-day notification requirement for Level IA training stating that a job may be awarded on a Friday and a class would be needed the following Monday. He stated that exams must be open book adding that his comments did not just reflect the construction industry's input but also that of the training industry. Ms. Champagne questioned Mr. Hornbuckle asking him to identify what type of individuals would need training on such short notice. She commented that this should not be a frequent occurrence as more and more individuals are trained. Mark Woodall (AGC) stated that he agreed with notification including only the estimated maximum number of attendees and not a final headcount. He responded to Ms. Champagne's question by stating that these quick response classes would be an exception not the rule and cited those that would be coming from out of state to do work. He also stated that open book testing is the industry standard for professionals such as designers and building inspectors.

Bettie Sleeth (HBAG) agreed with instructors submitting the maximum estimated number of individuals that would be in attendance in lieu of a headcount for Level IA training. She also agreed with Mr. Woodall's statement regarding open book testing as an industry standard and supported random audits. Ms. Sleeth expressed concern regarding the logistics of proctoring and said that there would need to be a very large pool of proctors to draw from. She also stated that if tests could not be graded on-site she would like a receipt to be issued proving attendance.

Mr. Wetherington asked how long the Commission thought it would take to grade a test. Dr. Shahlaee suggested writing in a 30-day grading period into the Rules. Ms. Wiggins asked if there was a way to use technology to speed up the process and Mr. Thompson suggested optical scanners to reduce the burden of grading the exam. Mr. Hamilton suggested that the SAB make a recommendation to the Commission and let the Commission work out the logistics.

Mr. Hamilton asked if the Board would like to take today's input into consideration and agree to a general consensus regarding the key issues or wait for Dr. Couch's comments and vote at the next meeting. The Board agreed to proceed with a vote.

Voting proceeded as follows:

Issue 1: Eligibility and application for education courses and examinations:

Level IA Certification:

60-day postmark for individuals only taking the exam – **Unanimous agreement**

Instructor shall notify SWCC \_\_\_\_\_ days in advance of course as to maximum estimated number in attendance.

- 7 day notification – 2 votes
- 30 day notification – 8 votes
- 14 day notification – 2 votes

**An affirmative vote of the majority of members approved a 30-day notification period.**

Level IB Certification:

Applicants are eligible with a minimum of \_\_\_\_\_ days of experience.

- 60 days experience (inclusive of application time) – 6 votes
- 90 days experience – 5 votes
- 6 months experience – 1 vote (Ms. Champagne asked to be recognized in the minutes as voting for 6 months experience).

**A majority of the Board did not vote to affirm a minimum number of days of experience.**

Level II Certification:

Level II Certification will be divided into two separate tracks. One track would be devoted to plan designers and the other to plan reviewers.

- Opposed – 1 vote
- In favor – 11 votes

**An affirmative vote of the majority of members approved dividing the Level II training into two separate tracks.**

Plan reviewers would be required to have a minimum of \_\_\_\_\_ experience.

- 60 day experience – 4 votes
- 6 months experience – 7 votes
- 1 year of experience – 2 votes

**An affirmative vote of the majority of members approved a requirement of 6 months of experience for plan reviewers.**

Issue 2: Proctoring of examinations

All exams will be proctored after the course is complete (on same day(s)) by proctors who would be approved SWCC staff or a pool of SWCC

approved proctors. Instructors must schedule the services of an approved proctor through the SWCC.

- Agreed with statement as written – 7 votes
- Approving instructors as proctors with random audits – 5 votes

**An affirmative vote of the majority of members approved the proctoring statement as written.**

Issue 3: Exams

Tests will be open book; or exams will be partial open book; or exam will be totally closed book.

- Timed open book tests – 8 votes
- Combination of open and closed book testing – 4 votes

**An affirmative vote of the majority of members approved timed open book testing.**

The Board discussed the results of voting. Mr. Bennett requested that the Level II section of the Rules be re-written and a new schematic be produced to recognize the new plan. Ms. Wiggins and Ms. Macrina requested that a definition of experience be developed for inclusion in the Rules.

Mr. Hamilton thanked Board members for their cooperation and the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by

Michaelyn Rozar