

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WELLS AND BORINGS

Virtual Meeting

Wednesday, March 2, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Members Present

Daniel England
Daniel Gibbs
Kelly Gribauval-Hite
Bruce Johnson
Troy Kuck
Roger Renner
Michael Steffl
Joseph Stevens
Mark Thein
Jordan Mayer
Michael Liljegren
Richard Lamb
Steve Robertson
Steven Traut
David Duffey

Others Present

Dave Schulenberg
Kara Dennis
Justine Greene
Jennifer Weier
Sue Lang
Brooke Lund
Corrie Floyd
Robyn Hetland
Emily Berquist
Tannie Eshenaur
Mary Johnson
Patrick Sarafolean
Mark Malmanger

Members Absent

David Kill
Annie Felix-Gerth

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m. by the Chairman of the Council, Roger Renner.

2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF March 2, 2022, MEETING AGENDA

The meeting agenda was approved with no suggested additions.

3. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF December 8, 2021, MEETING MINUTES

Mark Thein made a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Joseph Stevens seconded the motion. The meeting notes were updated to include that clarification of how grantee, Horizon Public Health, will contract out maintenance support for reverse osmosis treatment systems for eligible applicants with elevated arsenic.

4. INTRODUCTION OF WATER POLICY CENTER – Tannie Eshenaur

Tannie Eshenaur introduced the Water Policy Center, which is a new section within the Environmental Health Division at the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). This new section will address the environmental health aspects of water, particularly drinking water, in relation to public

health policy. Many projects and initiatives in this section are supported by the Clean Water Fund. Tannie is the program manager, and Emily Berquist and Frieda von Qualen, who were previously working in the Well Management Section, are now working in the Water Policy Center. Tannie provided an overview of the projects and initiatives that the Water Policy Center is planning relating to private well users.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Open Elevator Boring Contractor Seat – Kara Dennis

There is still a vacate seat on the Advisory Council on Wells and Borings, the elevator boring contractor seat.

Proposed Topics for 2023 License Renewal CEUs. – Kara Dennis

There is an option in the MDH Learning Center to provide feedback in an optional evaluation. Some of the suggested topics that were received from this evaluation for future CEU content included manganese or other emerging contaminants of concern, well disinfection, the history of the well code, well casing topics, and flowing wells. In general, there was a favorable rating for the MDH-presented online CEU program in the MDH Learning Center. The MDH Learning Center will be utilized to provide CEUs for 2023 license renewal. At this time, MDH leadership has not approved attending in-person events, so MDH staff will not be presenting CEUs at spring conventions and shows.

The goals of our CEU program is to satisfy the annual continuing education requirements specified in Minnesota Administrative Rule 4725; enhance the capacity to meet the “Minnesota Well Code,” through reinforcing expectations of the “Minnesota Well Code,” addressing problem areas and sharing best practices; provide education about upcoming issues that may affect public health, the well and boring industries, or the regulatory environment; provide licensed well and boring contractors with knowledge and educational tools to help their clients protect their health and groundwater; strengthen the relationship between licensed parties and MDH. The Advisory Council expressed favor for proposed CEU topics that include the history of the well code, guidance on sample collection, and overview of the delegated well programs.

Update on the 2022 Legislative Session. – Justine Greene

Interim program manager, Justine Greene, provide an update on the 2022 legislative session, which is currently five weeks in. MDH and the Well Management Program are watching a couple of proposed bills that are focused screening and testing for contaminants in private wells. There were several questions and comments regarding Minnesota Statutes, chapter 103G (Waters of the State) and the use of the Mount Simon-Hinckley aquifer. This topic will be covered in more detail during the June 1, 2022, Advisory Council meeting.

6. OVERVIEW OF DARCY TECHNOLOGY AND MDH’S RESPONSE – Jennifer Weier

The Darcy Heat exchange system is a geothermal system that transfers heat to and from groundwater by putting a heat exchange device and the associated piping directly in a water-supply well. This type of technology was developed by researchers at the University of Minnesota, and they later formed a business called Darcy Solutions, Inc. These systems differ from the two types of geothermal systems that are currently regulated in the “Minnesota Well Code,” board geothermal heat exchangers and groundwater thermal exchanging devices.

Darcy Solutions, Inc. first proposed these systems to MDH in 2019. At that time, MDH staff were informed that the plan was to construct and operate a few test systems before pursuing widespread use. Darcy Solutions, Inc. proposed legislation to allow the systems to be installed throughout the state during the 2021 legislative session, which was ultimately unsuccessful. Jennifer Weier provided a brief overview of how the technology works with the caveat that there is a plan for Darcy Solutions, Inc. to provide more detail during the June 1, 2022, Advisory Council meeting.

Variances are required for this technology since these systems eliminate the isolation distance between the bored geothermal heat exchanger (BGHE) piping and a water-supply well, use PVC, stainless steel, stainless-steel coupling, and spine-lock couplings for BGHE piping, and install BGHE piping without grouting it in place. At this time MDH has received nine variance requests and approved five (one test site, two for same site).

7. DISCUSSION ON LICENSING PROCESS – Corrie Floyd

Corrie Floyd introduced a process improvement project which will look at evaluating the MDH continuing education program to improve the process and reduce barriers. To obtain a baseline and gather input, a survey will be shared with the licensed community that will be used to inform potential improvement opportunities.

There has been a decrease in the number of licensed well and boring contractors from 2019 to 2022. This led to a discussion with the Advisory Council to ascertain if they have any experiences or observations that illustrate barriers to people becoming licensed.

8. EDUCATION AND OUTREACH MATERIALS DISCUSSION – Kara Dennis

There is a unique public health challenge with private well users, other than proper well construction, the responsibility lies on them to regularly test and treat their well water. Kara Dennis discussed the importance of sharing educational materials with private well users and asked if there were any gaps in the current library of education and outreach materials.

9. ADJOURN

Mark Thein made a motion to adjourn. Joseph Steven seconded that motion. The meeting was concluded at 11:30 a.m. by the Chairman of the Council, Roger Renner.