

**Georgia State Board of Examiners for Certification of Water & Wastewater Treatment
Plant Operators and Laboratory Analysts
Teleconference Board Meeting Minutes – February 20, 2023
Professional Licensing Boards Division, 237 Coliseum Dr., Macon, GA 31217**

Members Present:

- Margaret Doss, Chair
- Kenny Green, Vice-Chair
- Debbie Wright
- Kim Hembree
- Kartik Bhatt

Members Absent:

- Gil Shearouse

Others Present:

- Brad Coman, Executive Director
- Melanie Foster, Licensing Supervisor
- Kristin Mitchell, Board Support Specialist
- Anna Saxton, Licensing Analyst
- Mary Brannen, Sr. Assistant Attorney General
- Maggie Hasty, Legislative Director, Office of Georgia Secretary of State

Note: Visitors are excused during Executive Session unless scheduled for a personal appearance.

Margaret Doss, Chair, noted a quorum was present, called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m., and declared the meeting to be “open” pursuant to the Open and Public Meeting Act, O.C.G.A. §§50-14-1 et seq.

Agenda:

Kim Hembree moved, Debbie Wright seconded, and the Board voted to approve the February 20, 2023 Agenda as amended.

Proposed Legislation:

The Board reviewed and discussed House Bill 410, which would set the training requirements for the new Class III Groundwater Operator subclass at 24 hours, instead of the 40 hours required by Board Rule.

At the request of several of its stakeholders, including groundwater system operators, groundwater system owners, and operator organizations, the Board, in 2021, began investigating the idea of developing this entry-level operator subclass for groundwater-only systems serving a population of greater than 1,000. The current groundwater entry-level certification targets operators at systems serving less than 1,000. In Georgia, the Board regulates operators and operator requirements, but the Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division Watershed Protection Branch (EPD) regulates treatment plant requirements, including what class of operator is required to operate each plant. The current EPD Rules require a Class III or higher Drinking Water certification to operate any plant serving a population greater than 1,000. Because EPD regulates the Class of operator required at each plant, the Board involved EPD staff in the rulemaking effort for the proposed Class IIIG certification. The Board and EPD jointly determined to make the Class IIIG requirements mirror those of the Class III to allow both certificate holders to advance to the next level (Class II) if they met the requirements for the upper-level certification. Requirements to obtain the Class III Drinking Water Treatment Plant Operator certification include successful completion of a 40-hour basic water treatment course approved by the Board, possession of a high school diploma or GED, 3 months of experience working at a water treatment plant, and passage of the appropriate exam. Consequently, the Board set the requirements for the Class IIIG certification at successful completion of a 40-hour basic groundwater treatment course approved by the Board, possession of a high school diploma or GED, 3 months of experience working at a water treatment plant, and passage of the appropriate exam.

Throughout the rulemaking process to create a subclass of certification for Georgia’s groundwater operators (Class IIIG), the Board received input from its stakeholders, including operators, operator organizations within the state, and the EPD. At the hearing for the Rule change, one organization was opposed to the 40-hr training requirement; there was no other opposition voiced. The current approved 40-hr basic water training class covers source water, intakes, disinfection, corrosion control, laboratory procedures, safety, fluoridation, plant maintenance, management, coagulation, flocculation, sedimentation, and filtration. The last four topics are specific to surface water and can be removed from the class for groundwater; however, water storage facilities, distribution system facilities, and well systems would be added. After careful deliberation, looking at the amount of material to be covered in a class, and with the prior consensus of EPD, the Board decided to

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retain the 40-hr training requirement so the Class IIIG certification would be equivalent in its requirements to the Class III certification and would be able to stand as a prerequisite to the Class II certification, allowing qualified groundwater operators to advance to the next level rather than restricting their ability to move up. A 40-hr training class would also allow ample opportunity for the instructor to cover relevant material.

Kim Hembree moved, Kartik Bhatt seconded, and the Board voted to request that the members of the Environmental Subcommittee of the Georgia House of Representatives Natural Resources and Environment Committee not advance House Bill 410 to the full House. Kenny Green and Debbie Wright opposed.

The deciding majority of the Board noted that they would like the training requirement to remain at 40 hours, as stipulated in Board Rule, to maintain the equivalency of the Class IIIG certification with the current Class III certification, allowing operators to advance to the next level (Class II) from the IIIG and to provide ample training to individuals desiring to take this test, increasing the probability they will pass the examination.

Pam Burnett, Executive Director of the Georgia Association of Water Professionals, and Anna Truszczynski, Chief of the Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division Watershed Protection Branch, were in attendance and voiced their support for the Board to be able to set precertification requirements as the Board deems necessary.

There being no further business, Margaret Doss, Chair, declared the meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

The next meeting of the Georgia Board of Examiners for Certification of Water & Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators & Laboratory Analysts will be held on Wednesday, April 19, 2023, at 10:00 a.m.

Minutes recorded by: Kristin Mitchell, Board Support Specialist

Minutes reviewed and edited by: Brad Coman, Executive Director

Minutes approved on: April 19, 2023.


Margaret Doss, Chair


Brad Coman, Executive Director