

**STATE WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT OPERATOR  
APPRENTICESHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, March 19, 2014**

Madison Area Technical College  
2125 Commercial Avenue  
Madison, WI

**Approved Minutes**

<b>Members Present</b>	<b>Employer/Organization</b>
Dierker, Marty	Veolia
Freber, Kevin	City of Watertown Wastewater Treatment Plant
Wilson, Paul	Walworth County Sewage District
Zimmer, Kelly	MSA Professional Services

<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>Employer/Organization</b>
Bartel, Bruce	Green Bay Metropolitan Sewerage District
Thieszen, Sharon	Sheboygan Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant

<b>Consultant &amp; Guests</b>	<b>Employer/Organization</b>
Bushby, Lisa	Department of Natural Resources
Cook, Jim	Madison Area Technical College
Pagan, Nicci	Gateway Technical College
Horvath, Stephen	Moraine Park Technical College
Saltes, Jack	WI Department of Natural Resources
Schmidt, Mark	Moraine Park Technical College
Smith, Owen	Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards - Madison

- 
1. The meeting was called to order at 10:07 a.m. by Chair Marty Dierker in conformance with the Wisconsin open meeting laws.
  2. A roll call was conducted and a sign-in sheet was circulated.
  3. The minutes of the November 5, 2013, meeting were reviewed and approved as written.

## 4. Old Business

### a. **2014 Biennial Apprenticeship Conference Summary**

Owen Smith reported the outcomes of the 2014 Biennial Wisconsin Apprenticeship Conference Summary, asked Members for their feedback, and explained the Bureau's plans for future Conferences.

#### i. Summary

Overall, the Conference was a great success, attracting the second highest Conference attendance—450 participants—despite below-freezing temperatures, and earning praise for its speakers and workshops. Unfortunately, winter temperatures forced most high schools throughout the state to close. As a result, the Expo was attended by only 50 of the more than 600 high school students who had registered.

#### ii. Speakers

All speakers earned high ratings from attendees, especially Governor Walker, national economist Anirban Basu and national author Mark Breslin. Governor Walker's speech earned the Conference brief media coverage in several state metropolitan news and television outlets.

#### iii. Workshops

Most workshops received very favorable feedback from attendees, particularly for their professional relevance. The Conference offered a series of introductory workshops on apprenticeship and key partners, such as "The Department of Public Instruction 101"; and several well-received workshops on youth apprenticeship and apprenticeship prep programs. The three most attended workshops were, "Preparing Students for Apprenticeship Programs," "Diversity in the Workplace," and "Understanding Generational Differences in the Workplace."

#### iv. Criticisms and Suggestions

The Conference received two common criticisms: it was held during the timeframe of year that poses the highest risk for severe cold and inclement weather; and the removed location of the Expo, a mile from the conference activities, limited the amount of time attendees could visit without missing workshops and discouraged some attendees from visiting at all.

Therefore, the most common suggestions for improvement were twofold: hold the Conference in spring or fall; and hold the Expo and Conference as unique, separate events.

Owen Smith asked the members for their responses to the Conference. A general discussion on the pros and cons followed. Members supported holding the Conference in early March, noting that the timeframe would not conflict with major trade conferences; and supported hosting the Conference and Expo during the same year, but on separate dates. Madison Area and Gateway Technical College supported holding the Conference and Expo on alternating years.

#### v. Future Conferences

Owen Smith acknowledged the downside of scheduling the Conference in the first calendar quarter of the year and holding the Expo in a removed location from the main Conference area. However, he explained the factors that make the timeframe and hosting the two events together the most ideal plan.

Foremost, the first calendar quarter of the year is when the most apprenticeship stakeholders are available. Spring is when the construction sector, the largest sector of apprenticeship stakeholders, typically prepares to return to work, sometimes as early as

mid-March and public schools generally have spring break. Fall is the beginning of the academic calendar for high schools and technical colleges, and the construction trades typically remain active through October. Late fall and early winter contain deer hunting season, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Second, the few hotels that can provide all Conference accommodations are most likely to offer the state lodging rate during the off-season months. The Conference requires a large meeting space, five-to-seven breakout rooms for workshops, and at least 20,000 square feet for the Expo. Many hotels can meet the first two requirements, but very few can satisfy all three requirements.

Third, hosting the Expo and Conference as separate events on alternating years would place the Bureau in perpetual planning and fundraising cycles for the last half of each year. Conference preparations typically take at least six months, and the Bureau would be continuously asking its stakeholder base for donations.

Therefore, the Bureau will present feedback from the state committees to the Advisory Council with two recommendations: the next Conference be held in early March to maximize the potential for favorable weather without conflicting with preparations for the construction year; and the Expo in the same location as the Conference but one day prior to the opening of the Conference to maximize attendance.

#### **b. NR 114 Update**

Jack Saltes updated attendees on the status of revisions to NR 114, which governs operator certifications.

Rule revisions are in the final stage of legislative review, and will be published most likely by the end of May 2014. The revised rule would take effect one year from the date of publication, which gives the Department of Natural Resources one year to implement the program changes; such as, new study guides.

A critical component of NR 114 is its new, advanced certification point system, which will move the industry into a "new era." Among the many features of the system is a brand new collection system certification for all plants with such a system. The process for the certification is intentionally long; ten to fifteen years. The exam itself will take two years to develop. From the time of issuance of the Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit, the driving document of a treatment facility, it would take one individual five years to earn the collection system certification.

Last, the code creates flexible options for the delivery of education and training. If educators want their course to be listed as preparatory for advanced certification, then the instructor must submit the course curriculum and syllabus to DNR for review.

#### **c. Gateway Technical College Update**

Jennifer Pagan updated attendees on the development and implementation of face-to-face related instruction for the Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator apprenticeship program. The program was approved by the college's board in January. The college has since released an outreach brochure for the program, and will host a meeting for prospective sponsors and apprentices on April 9 at the college's new IMET Center. Six (6) prospective apprentices and four (6) prospective sponsors have expressed interest in the program to-date.

Owen Smith clarified that the Bureau supports the expansion of the program to additional technical colleges, if the colleges can satisfy all of the required competencies and have sufficient interest from area employers and apprentices. During the first year of the pilot program at Moraine Park Technical College, which offers the paid related instruction entirely on-line, the Bureau supported the pilot only, in order to optimize the success of a new program within the industry. Since that time, regional pockets of employers have expressed interest to their local technical colleges adopting the program with face-to-face instruction. Therefore, the Bureau sees the expansion of the program as driven by industry interest.

Jim Cook stated the Madison Area Technical College has received some inquiries from industry into developing the program, but has not conducted interest surveys or outreach efforts.

Jack Saltes commented that the program at Gateway will be a good test study to gauge industry interest in face-to-face related instruction, because some of the largest treatment plants are within the college's service area. In contrast, smaller treatment plants simply function differently, and online related instruction would be more practical and feasible for them to implement due to geographic distance.

A general discussion followed on the historical educational requirements for entry-level operators. The current generation of operators will retire in a steady exodus, and treatment technology has advanced far beyond the conventional methods utilized originally. Therefore, new entry-level operators will need to be familiar with more advanced technology and require more education. This can be seen already in the high degree of knowledge possessed by graduates of two and four year diploma programs.

#### **d. Outreach Update**

Stephen Horvath reported that two apprentices are enrolled currently in the program, one from Green Bay and one from the Village of Dickeyville, but the most substantial obstacle to the program continues to be the lack of sponsors and jobs. The college has received lots of interest from potential applicants, but they simply cannot find the requisite employment opportunity. In response, the college is increasing its outreach efforts, particularly to veterans, because the military is putting considerable effort into making education and experience transfer into civilian schools and institutions.

Owen Smith mentioned the Helmets to Hardhats initiative, which provides for a more direct transition into apprenticeships programs. Although the program primarily targets construction trades, the Bureau would be willing to research whether it could apply to Operators. Members supported this idea.

**Follow-up:** The Bureau will research whether the Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator apprenticeship program could participate in the Helmets to Hardhats program.

**Jack Saltes** suggested that the Bureau and the Department of Natural Resources submit a request to co-present at the annual conference of state wastewater engineers to be held November 9-10. Jack suggested that the Bureau invite representatives of the Dickeyville and Green Bay treatment plants to share their experiences of the program. Including Dickeyville would demonstrate to a large audience of stakeholders that the program can be successful for plants that process less than 1 MGD.

**Follow-up:** Jack will ask the organizers to be included on the agenda. The call for topics will be in April.

## **e. Apprenticeship Advisory Council Update**

### i. Apprenticeship Awareness Toolkit

Owen Smith walked members through the Apprenticeship Awareness Toolkit website, a one-stop resource on Apprenticeship for high school guidance counselors, teachers and staff to assist their raising awareness of registered apprenticeship among high school students and parents.

The website was created and is administered by the Department of Public Instruction.

Key content includes:

- An explanation of registered apprenticeship as well as a separate explanation of youth apprenticeship, which explicitly states it is "not the same as [registered] apprenticeship."
- Apprenticeship Salary Chart, a downloadable document that compares the potential earning of an apprentice to an individual on a four-year degree program
- Educator How to Sheet, which advises educators on classroom strategies for engaging students about apprenticeship, such as inviting industry representatives as guest speakers
- Apprenticeship Promotional Flyers, five versions, one per audience, communicate three central points to parents, educators, students, and more: apprentices earn a good wage without incurring student debt; they earn college credit, and they earn nationally recognized credentials.
- Sample Apprenticeship Pathway Program of Study, which outlines how high school general education courses and specific electives prepare students for potential apprenticeships in different economic sectors, such as manufacturing

Owen reminded members that the Toolkit is an organic, living website that is to be updated with new material as stakeholders see fit. He asked the Committee whether it preferred to publish additional material to the site.

A general discussion on the current and potential content followed. Key points included: members suggested including a sample course of study for utility occupations and links to the DNR site on operators and the Wisconsin Wastewater Operators Association. Jack Saltes suggested adding a sentence that captures the noble goal of the profession: "produce clean water which is critical to protecting both water quality and public health."

**Follow-up:** BAS will submit the suggestions to the Department of Public Instruction.

### ii. Parents' Guide to Apprenticeship

The Bureau will produce a guide to apprenticeship this fall for guidance counselors to distribute during career counseling sessions with parents and students. The document will be modeled after the Wisconsin Technical College System program guide. The project was recommended by guidance counselors who attended the apprenticeship presentation by Ms. Morgan and Mr. Clay Tschillard at the Wisconsin School Counselors Association meeting this spring. The counselors specifically requested a print publication because many students do not have access to computers and/or internet, particularly in rural areas.

#### **f. Other**

Jack Saltes suggested removing the requirement of sponsor treatment plants to have a daily flow rate of at least 1 MGD. Removing the requirement make the program more doable for smaller plants, which constitute the majority of treatment plants in the State. He also suggested designing an outreach brochure for potential municipal sponsors that would explain the advantages of apprenticeship and how the program works.

**Follow-up:** The Bureau will include these items on the agenda for the 2014 fall meeting: revise sponsor qualifications and develop an outreach brochure for municipalities.

### **5. New Business**

#### **a. BAS Personnel Updates**

Owen Smith reported several recent personnel changes within the Bureau:

Liz Pusch is the new Apprenticeship Training Representative (ATR) for Area 10, which includes Dodge, Ozaukee and Washington counties. Liz worked formerly as a legislative aide in Madison. She is from the Dodge, Ozaukee and Washington county area. The area was served previously by ATR Barb Robakowski.

Andrea Loeffelholz is the new ATR for Area 6, which includes Dane and Rock counties. Andrea worked formerly as a grant specialist for the WI Department of Transportation in Madison. The area was served previously by ATR Mary Pierce, who accepted a Policy Analyst position within the Bureau's Administrative Office in Madison.

Darrel Cappetta is the new coordinator of the Veterans in Piping program. Darrel was previously in the Office of Veterans services where he worked as a DVOP

#### **b. 2013 WI Act 57 (Apprenticeship Completion Award Program) and DWD 295.25 (Emergency Rule)**

The Department of Workforce Development is drafting an emergency administrative rule to implement 2013 Act 57, the Apprenticeship Completion Award Program (ACAP). ACAP was passed in November 2013, and will be active from June 2, 2014 through June 30, 2015. Developed by the State Legislature and signed by Gov. Walker, ACAP partially reimburses eligible apprentices, sponsors and employers for partial related instruction costs. Available funding totals \$450,000.

ACAP will be administered by the Bureau, as directed by law. BAS may reimburse the apprentices, the employer and the sponsor—whichever incurred the cost—a maximum of \$1,000 for up to 25% of the tuition, book, materials and other course fees directly associated with related instruction. An apprentice is eligible when he or she successfully completes either the one-year calendar anniversary of the contract start date or the entire apprenticeship program within the ACAP performance period.

Karen Morgan reported several key considerations and requirements for implementing the program. First, it will be a learning experience for the Bureau, and BAS will pay close attention to any lessons learned. Second, the Bureau will require the sponsor to confirm that the apprentice is in good standing to qualify for the one-year reimbursement. If an apprentice is eligible, the reimbursement will go to the party that incurred the cost. Split reimbursements can be made if more than one party incurred expense.

The Bureau plans to present performance data to the Legislature after the program concludes in the hopes that the program is continued in subsequent fiscal years. ACAP is projected to be used extensively by apprenticeship stakeholders, because similar funds

available through the SAGE Grant (2011-2013) were disbursed entirely. Ideally, all funding will be disbursed before the performance period concludes, which would show a high need for additional funding.

A general discussion on the history and implementation of the program followed. Members expressed their support of the program, as well as their disappointment that more apprentices were not enrolled in the program.

**c. Other**

No additional items were brought forward for discussion.

**6. DNR Update**

This item was completed during the discussions of 4b.

**7. WTCS Update**

This item was completed during the discussions of 4c and 4d.

**8. WWTPO Apprenticeship Program Participants**

Two apprentices and two sponsors are enrolled currently in the program.

**9. Next Meeting Date and Location**

The 2014 fall meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, September 16, at 10:00 a.m., at the Walworth County Sewerage District in Delavan, WI.

**10. The meeting adjourned** at 12:25 pm.

**11. Follow-up Items**

As a result of the meeting, the follow actions will be taken:

- i. The Bureau will research whether the Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator apprenticeship program could participate in the Helmets to Hardhats program.
- ii. The DNR will request that DNR and BAS be included on the agenda of the annual conference of wastewater engineers in November.
- iii. BAS will either eliminate the minimum requirement of sponsors to process at least MGD, or BAS will formally include the item on the agenda for the 2014 fall meeting.
- iv. BAS will convene a focus group to create an outreach brochure for municipalities and general language for outreach efforts.
- v. BAS will submit suggested additions to Apprenticeship Toolkit site to DPI

*Submitted by Owen Smith, Program and Policy Analyst.*