

Soil Scientist Board Meeting Minutes

The Indiana Registry of Soil Scientists Board (IRSS) met in the office of the Indiana State Chemist at Purdue University on January 13, 2010.

Those in attendance were Don Ruesch, Spence Williams, Gary Steinhardt, and John Bonsett. Also attending was Soil Scientist Randy Staley.

Minutes from July 2009 meeting were not available for review. A meeting of the Board on December 7, 2009 failed to have a quorum available so no official business took place. Gary Steinhardt and Don Ruesch were in attendance and they discussed the June 3 and 4, 2010 field exam to be held in Hamilton County. A Fall Meeting is to be held in the northwest part of Indiana. Specific location and dates have not been announced. This represents the minutes recorded from the December 7, 2009 meeting.

January 13, 2010

Randy Staley addressed the Board. Randy expressed his concerns about the ISDH employees doing soil evaluations that are taking business away from the private practicing soil scientists. In some cases the State soil scientist had been brought into the investigation when the work had already been undertaken by the private soil scientist.

The cases of state soil scientist involvement have been identified in multiple counties, including Parke, Owen and Morgan Counties.

By ISDH policy, the ISDH Soil Scientists become involved in residential and commercial site reviews at the request of the local health department when special circumstance requires. Randy mentioned there seems to be more and more situations when the State Soil Scientists becomes involved and at times the State Soil Scientists have been brought in, in place of the private Soil Scientists, who have already been involved in projects.

One of these cases involved a proposed municipal onsite system planned for the Coal City Sewer District and another for a follow-up site evaluation for a Presby systems in Morgan County. In another situation it was reported that the State Soil Scientists became involved due to a financial hardship. Spence Williams also expressed an awareness of similar circumstances of state involvement on new residential sites.

Gary Steinhardt questioned if there is enough specific clarification in the State rule to address this concern. He felt this situation might be best addressed by a policy change of the ISDH or from a change of the State Code.

The State Soil Scientist responds to individual cases at the request of the local health department and at the direction of the state supervisors.

Gary Steinhardt suggested that the State Soil Scientists should be utilized in reviewing questionable situations not the initial visit. The question arose as to who reviews the ISHD Soil Scientists if there is a question or need for an additional opinion.

Don Ruesch suggested sending a letter to the State Department of Health to explain this situation. John suggested the letter be sent to Dr. Monroe, State Health Commissioner with a copy to Mike Metler, Director Environmental Public Health Division.

In a related matter, Randy Staley pointed out that at times other state and federal soil trained employees are providing soil services in competition with private soil scientist contractors. It would appear that representatives from these agencies have the ability to provide the service with less overhead costs thereby they may be able to provide services at a lower rate. The blended job of these state and federal soil scientists may create a potential conflict and violate the Code of Professional Conduct.

Gary suggested a letter to registered Soil Scientists advising that they need to separate their private business and those associated with their public employment.

Gary Steinhardt made a motion to send a letter to Dr. Monroe related to the utilization of the ISDH Soil Scientists requesting a timely resolution to this concern, and another to registered Soil Scientists concerning the ethics related to public and private consulting.

The motion was seconded by John Bonsett. The motion was carried 4 – 0.

The Board discussed a vacancy on the Board and the reappointment of current members. It was suggested that Don Ruesch make the necessary contacts to have all Board positions filled and made current.

The Board was made aware of H.B. 1053, which has been appointed to the local government committee. This bill, if passed, would allow for a user fee to be collected upon the issuance of a septic system permit, (new construction or repair). This fee would be utilized for education and research related to septic system operations. These funds would help re-establish a program similar to the former Purdue "onsite program".

Gary Steinhardt stated currently "research is being replaced with a good sales pitch".

It was reported that Bill Rutherford has passed the state exam and appears to be eligible for registration. Tim Porter has passed the exam, but no application has been filed and there is no field experience or CEU credits identified. CEU of Bob Jones, David Tuszynski, Jerold Shively and James Brown were reviewed.

Tuszynski

The next meeting has tentatively been scheduled for June 3, 2010 to coincide with the Hamilton County Meeting. The meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm.



John Bonsett, Secretary