



# State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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## **New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection State Well Drillers and Pump Installers Examining and Advisory Board Meeting Minutes for September 21, 2023**

*Approved by the Board on October 19, 2023*

**Board Members Participating Via Telephone/Microsoft Teams:** Art Becker (Chairman), Gary Poppe (Vice-Chairman), Joe Yost, Gordon Craig, Dave Lyman, Eric Hoffmann, Jeff Hoffman, Richard Dalton, and Steve Domber

**Board Members Absent:** N/A

**Board Legal Representative Present:** N/A

**NJDEP Water Supply (Bureau of Water Allocation and Well Permitting) Staff Present:** Jennifer Myers, Steve Reya, Michael Schumacher, Mark Ortega, and Steve Vargo

**Other NJDEP Staff Present:** Mitch Reicher, Northern Water Compliance and Enforcement

**Members of the Public:** Wesley Eichfeld, MB Drilling; Dermot Dillon, Summit Drilling/New Jersey Ground Water Association (NJGWA)

### **1. Call to Order and Introductions-**

The meeting was called to order at 9:33 am with a quorum present via Microsoft Teams and telephone. Notice of the meeting and instructions on how to participate by video or phone were listed on the Board's website.

### **2. Review and Certification of the August 17, 2023, Meeting Minutes-**

A. Becker asked if anyone had any comments on the August 17<sup>th</sup> draft minutes. No discussion was needed.

**A motion to approve the draft minutes from August 17, 2023, as written, was made by G. Poppe, seconded by S. Domber, and approved by all except for E. Hoffmann and J. Yost, who abstained because they were not present at the August meeting.**

**3. Review and Certification of License Applications-**

A. Becker said that there are two license applications for review: one Pump Installer and one Environmental Resource and Geotechnical (ERG) well driller.

A. Becker noted that the Pump Installer applicant, Mr. Andrew Phillips, provided a letter with his application which the Board needed to review. S. Reya explained the contents of the letter to the Board. In the letter, Mr. Phillips noted that he worked for Robbins Water Service, and he was unable to obtain five jobs he worked on to verify his experience with his former employer. S. Reya added that no specific reason was given for why he was unable to obtain this information.

S. Reya added that he received an email from Robbins Water Service staff, which stated that they would be willing to provide the employment history information to the Board or Department, if asked. Given the additional details received from Robbins Water Service, the Department believes that the license application is deficient. S. Reya noted that if the employer stated that they are willing to provide work experience for the applicant, Mr. Phillips should obtain the documentation and submit a completed application, as is required for all pump installer applicants. A. Becker asked for the Board to weigh in on this topic.

**A motion to not accept the Pump Installer license application from Mr. Andrew Phillips due to lack of training information was made by J. Yost. This motion was seconded by G. Craig.**

Additional discussion took place before the motion was voted on.

R. Dalton said that he had some questions about prior exceptions made for Pump Installers. G. Craig said that Robbins Water Service is able and willing to provide the information. S. Reya noted that while Mr. Phillips provided tax information which showed that he worked for Robbins Water Service, they do not show that he did any pump work during his time with the company.

J. Hoffman asked if the Board would be willing to issue a conditional approval, contingent on what Robbins Water Service provides to the Department. M. Ortega asked for the Board not to issue a conditional approval because the references that Mr. Phillips used will likely be affected and a new application will need to be submitted.

The Board returned to the motion on the table.

**All Board members were in favor of the motion except for R. Dalton, who was opposed.**

A. Becker asked if there was any further discussion needed for the ERG well driller license applicant. No discussion was needed.

**A motion to approve the one ERG license applicant for licensure was made by G. Poppe. This motion was seconded by S. Domber and approved unanimously.**

License Type	Applicant Name	Employer
ERG	Patrick Morris	ERC Environmental

#### **4. Enforcement-**

##### *Field Activities*

S. Vargo discussed field activities between August and September. He said that he went to witness a driller construct a well in accordance with a permit condition, but the well driller had cancelled. He instead did an unannounced visit with another driller and reported that everything was in compliance.

##### *Notices of Non-Compliance (NONC) and Enforcement Referrals*

S. Vargo said that the Department sent out 13 NONCs in August. Two of them were for instances where permit conditions to install additional lengths of casing to the proposed well location infringing on the minimum required setback distances between the well and septic were not met. In one of these instances, the well driller identified the issue and explained to the Department that he was working with a builder on two properties, but accidentally referred to the permit that did not require additional casing when installing the well, thus installing less than what was required in the subject well. The well driller decommissioned the well which was not drilled in accordance with the permit conditions, obtained a new permit, and drilled a conforming well. In the other instance, the well driller is contesting the NONC. S. Vargo also discussed another driller who did not obtain authorization to seal three wells which needed prior approval.

S. Vargo said that one referral was sent to Southern Compliance and Enforcement on August 3, 2023 regarding a potentially improperly decommissioned well at a residential property. He further noted that four other referrals were previously sent to Compliance and Enforcement and are still pending. Two of these cases went to Northern Compliance and Enforcement, and still need to be assigned to a case manager. The other two are in Southern Compliance and Enforcement and have a case manager assigned to them.

#### **5. Program Updates-**

##### *Staffing*

S. Reya provided a brief update on staffing levels in the Well Permitting Section. He said that an entry-level backfill position for the vacant Section Chief will be filled soon. J. Mattle retired in May 2023 and the Section Chief promotional position has not been announced yet.

E. Hoffmann departed at 10:00 am.

##### *Bader Field Geothermal Well Project*

S. Reya informed the Board of some discussions that have occurred for a potential geothermal well field at Bader Field, in Atlantic City. The contractors are currently proposing to install up to 7,000 geothermal wells to a total depth of 700 feet. S. Reya pointed out that this depth would penetrate the confining unit above the “Atlantic City 800-foot Sands” aquifer system, which is a major source of drinking water in the region. The aquifers above the 800’ sands have known saltwater contamination. S. Reya also noted that this site, which was formerly an airport, has known, but undelineated contamination that needs to be addressed. Both of these issues are a major concern within the Department and any evaluation of the geothermal wells will entail prevention of cross contaminating the deeper confined aquifer(s).

A. Becker thanked S. Reya for the update and added that he hopes that the Department continues to take a close look at this project. A. Becker noted that he was involved in very early discussions on this project. He suggested that, if the project proceeds, a licensed International Ground Source Heat Pump Association (IGSHPA) inspector be brought on to the project, like Princeton. G. Craig said that his company did a pilot hole at this site.

J. Yost asked for more specifics on the proposed well construction. G. Craig explained how the wells would be constructed. J. Myers further discussed the Department's perspective on the project and also noted that many other Department programs are involved in the review of the proposed redevelopment of this site.

*October Meeting*

M. Ortega informed the Board that the October meeting will require the Board to review two large conferences, in addition to some smaller courses. He said that either he or S. Reya will provide the Board with the course information two weeks ahead of the meeting to give them adequate time to review everything. A. Becker thanked M. Ortega for the information.

**6. Adjournment-**

A. Becker informed the Board that he will not be present at the upcoming October Board meeting. He asked G. Poppe to lead the meeting. A. Becker asked for M. Ortega to still send him the continuing education information and he'll provide feedback ahead of the meeting. S. Reya said that the next Board meeting will be held on Thursday, October 19, 2023. A. Becker thanked everyone for attending.

**A motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:13 was made by G. Poppe. This motion was seconded by J. Hoffman and approved unanimously.**