



STATE OF WASHINGTON
ADVISORY BOARD OF PLUMBERS

Mail correspondence to: PO Box 44470 □ Olympia, Washington 98504-4470

Meeting Minutes April 21, 2015

Board Members

Steve Menne, Journey Level Plumber, Chair
Jake Tapani, Journey Level Plumber
Dave Weisbeck, Public Member
Evan Conklin, Plumbing Business
Dave Weickum, Specialty Plumber

Department of Labor & Industries

Joel Sacks, Director
Ernie LaPalm, Deputy Director
Elizabeth Smith, Assistant Director, Fraud Prevention & Labor Standards
Dean Simpson, Chief, Contractor Registration/Plumber Certification//FAS
Bruce Springer, Plumbing Technical Specialist
Jesse Jameson, Contractor Technical Specialist
Jackie Lemons, Plumber Certification Supervisor
Don Jenson, Budget Analyst
Daina Shea, Administrative Assistant
Terry Kleir, Plans Examiner
Michael Luke, Plans Examiner
Jason Summers, Plans Examiner
Deb Anderson, Plans Examiner
Lindsey Gasper, Customer Service Specialist

Guests

Ed Holmes, United Association of Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 32
Russell Thompson, Washington State Association of Plumbers & Pipefitters
Todd Allred, Allred's Mechanical Solutions LLC
Shandice Allred, Allred's Mechanical Solutions LLC
Krista Braaksma, WA State Building Code Council
Tim Downes, UA Local 26 Plumbers & Pipefitters
Charly Mitchel, Mitchel Plumbing, PHCCWA

Call to Order

The Advisory Board of Plumber's meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. on April 21, 2015.

Approve Minutes

The January 20, 2015 meeting minutes were approved as written.

Advisory Board Appointments

Jackie reported that Evan agreed to serve another term. She added a recruitment process is underway to replace Steve Menne, who is retiring. His position represents a journey level plumber. Steve commented that positions become available periodically, and encouraged those who are thinking about applying to attend the meetings and consider submitting an application. Evan asked if the board has any influence as to who is appointed. Bruce responded that the decision is ultimately up to the director. The recruitment process ends May 1st.

Plumbing Infractions

Bruce reported that there were 134 infractions written for a total of \$45,000.00 for the first quarter of 2015. Because the infraction report is broken down by regions, Bruce explained which region was associated with what area in the state. Charly asked if there was a map with that information on the website. Steve questioned whether contact information for inspectors was available on the website. Dean responded that we would publish the inspector information on our website.

Evan commented that there seems to have been a change in policy and procedures for compliance in the last couple of years and it looks like they are citing more people that are advertising. Bruce said that when FAS and Compliance split, the inspectors were able to concentrate solely on compliance and they are catching more of them. He added there are also a lot of handymen performing plumbing and the Detection Tracking Unit (DTU) is very good at catching them based off of advertising.

Dean said he thinks the inspectors are getting better because of training. Bruce said that not many of the inspectors are plumbers, so there has been a bit of a learning curve for them as to what plumbing actually is. He added, they are getting better at it. Jesse mentioned that several of the regions have done sweeps on the weekends targeting plumbing infractions.

Jake asked how many compliance inspectors are there. Dean replied that there are twenty one in the field, three in Central Office, which includes one working supervisor, and three additional supervisors. He added that he had a fraud package that he wanted that would increase our numbers, but we also got hit with a 15% general fund reduction. He said he's looking at revisiting that to increase not just compliance inspectors, but adding auditors and revenue agents to handle the additional workload. Ed mentioned that the population of Washington is increasing tenfold and we need to increase those numbers to keep up with it.

Dean said that three years ago, the agency changed direction on compliance stops and fighting the underground economy. He said that rather than just look at the unregistered contractor, the inspector in the field is now doing a quality jobsite visit and checking multiple statutes that they have the ability to infract.

Jesse said the inspectors were targeted to make 70 to 75 jobsite stops per month. He added that was driving them to take a quick snap shot of what work was being done so they could move on to the next jobsite. He said we'd rather have a quality jobsite check. Now they are checking the contractor, walking around the house to see if perhaps someone is working in the back, and knocking on the door to see if someone is plumbing inside. We cut the number of jobsite visits, but the inspectors are expected to perform a much more thorough review.

Dean said, and he credited Bruce, that there is more of an awareness and understanding for non-technical inspectors to identify plumbing. He added, we're getting better at plumbing infractions.

Russ mentioned that we try to involve the public more in reporting fraud. Dean suggested that we have DTU make a presentation at the next board meeting to increase awareness for reporting fraud. He added we would send the contact information for the compliance inspectors to everyone at the meeting.

Charly said it would be nice if we could get the building officials to also recognize the non-plumbers. He said there is no incentive for them to call L & I. Dean suggested they invite a few people from WABO to come to some of the meetings.

Tim said that he is happy to hear that compliance inspections are being done based on the big picture of the Underground Economy.

Fiscal Update

Don said the fund balance is healthy and as of March 2015 is \$324,000. He added there was a significant increase in revenue in March which was largely comprised from exam and licensing fees. He said when you look at the revenue for February and March; it may be the beginning of a trend or may be just a seasonal uptick. He said that Electrical, Elevator, FAS, and Contractors also had an increase in revenue for the month. Don said he would continue to monitor and study the trend.

Evan said he understands where the money comes from but he doesn't understand where it goes. He added he thinks the numbers should be a lot bigger and we should be spending a lot more on in certain areas. Dean said he can only spend what the legislature allots him. Steve added we haven't had a fee increase since 2011. Dean said we are looking at fee increases and that will increase revenue, but it doesn't give him the ability to spend more. Steve said if we have a fee increase perhaps that would be the time to ask for an increase in the allotment.

Discussion followed.

WAC Rules

Bruce said that now that legislation has slowed down, he has been in contact with our rules analyst. She requested a copy of our communication plan and will be preparing to move forward and file the CR-101 in June.

Evan asked how visible licensing will be enforced. Dean said that once we get through rule, we'll have to make a decision on that. He added that he didn't see it being any different than Electrical Licensing. He added the small residential contractor will be tough. Evan said we really need to make an effort to educate the general public. Ed said everyone needs to work together on this to get the word out. He said if we have a plan and a common goal, we can make this work. He added that the state, the union, and all the contractors have to work together to educate the general public in the state. Evan said we have to figure out how to get the residential industry involved with this too. Dean said if we pool our resources, we can get the story out there.

Todd said that he thinks wearing your license on a lanyard is unsafe. He suggested wearing a patch on your shirt. Ed said at Hanford, you have to wear a lanyard with about 18 cards on them. He said if there was a task that was you felt was unsafe, you just stuff it in your shirt.

Discussion followed.

Plumbing Legislation

Dean said that all of the plumbing bills introduced this session have died.

Charly said that he would still like to see a plumbing general contractor registration so we could identify what companies are actually performing plumbing. He added that might be the first step to getting a master plumber license. Dean suggested if we are going to move forward we need to narrow it down to one, two, or three things that we really want. He said let's take the important things and really start working on them.

Evan mentioned that everyone that wants to do away with plumbing licenses seems to be very well financed. Ed said that there are many organizations that are against us, but it's all about the money at the end of the day. He said you will be seeing a big change as to how the UA will be a moving forward and it will help the whole industry.

New Business

Evan said he volunteered for the Advisory Board because no one would step up. He added he'd like to see the board have a little more power and be able to come up with some solutions to some of the issues. Charly questioned whether other states have boards that certify. Dean said the Advisory Board can move things, including legislation, if we come to agreement. He said he's more than willing to reach out to other states to find out how their boards function. Steve suggested that we look at the Montana and Oregon boards to see how they operate.

Tim asked if the board has a strategic plan in place. Steve said we haven't had a plan. He added we've met a few times in the last year to discuss what legislation we'd really like to have. Dean said we could dedicate a board meeting to that discussion if they'd like.

Todd asked the board if they felt like their time served on the board was a waste because of lack of direction or action. Dave Weisbeck responded that he drives 600 miles in one day to come to the meetings. He said "No, it's not a waste". Steve added that at times it may feel like that. He added that when we have subcommittee meetings, you will see that the people on the board genuinely care about the industry and it makes it worthwhile. He said we are slowly but surely getting there. Evan stated that he was a little discouraged in the last year, but he said we have more interest now than what we had three years ago. He said he now thinks it may be possible that we can make some changes and the conversations we're having now are some of the best he's seen. Dave Weickum said he just committed to three more years. He said we've had subcommittee meetings discussing some of the target issues. Evan added that the changes we need require legislation and we need the whole industry involved with it. Dean said that if it makes sense to the agency and the industry, we'll do what we can. He added we have to have buy in by everybody. Charly suggested that the board make a change to WAC 296-400A-050 so that the board meetings occur more frequently as needed.

Joel Sacks, Director, Dept. of Labor & Industries, introduced himself and on behalf of the agency and the Governor, thanked Steve for his years of service. He said that from his perspective, if the industry comes together and finds common ground, he would be happy to put resources forward to partner with them to influence the legislative process to promote the industry and public safety.

Ernie, Liz, and Jackie congratulated Steve on his retirement and thanked him for his service. Jackie presented him with a plaque on behalf of the agency.

Motion to adjourn.