

STATE OF WASHINGTON
ADVISORY BOARD OF PLUMBERS

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

Meeting Minutes April 19, 2016

Board Members

Evan Conklin, Plumbing Business, Chairman
Ed Holmes, Journey Level Plumber, Vice Chairman
Jake Tapani, Journey Level Plumber
Dave Weisbeck, Public Member
Linda Houser, Plumbing Business
Dave Weickum, Specialty Plumber

Department of Labor & Industries

Dean Simpson, Chief, Contractor Registration/Plumber Certification//FAS
Bruce Springer, Plumbing Technical Specialist
Jesse Jameson, Contractor Technical Specialist
Jackie Lemons, Plumber Certification Supervisor

Guests

Todd Allred, Allred Mechanical Solutions
Margaret Hayes, Raymark Plumbing & Sewer
Larry Fischer, Prima Plumbing
Pat Dickinson, Service Plumbing & Heating Inc.
Bill Buckingham, South West Plumbing, PHCC
Connie Buckingham, South West Plumbing
Krista Braaksma, Building Code Council
Terry Love, Love's Plumbing
G.F. Scheuermann, IAPMO
Becky Simpson, Consumer

Call to Order

The Advisory Board of Plumber's meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. on April 19, 2016.

Approve Minutes

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the January 19, 2016 meeting minutes as written.

Plumbing Infractions

Bruce reported that 160 infractions were written during the first quarter of 2016 for a total penalty amount of \$57,750.00. He added that was an increase over the previous quarter. Evan asked if there was data available as to how many tickets were written to registered contractors as opposed to unregistered contractors. Bruce replied that he would look into it.

Evan mentioned that he had received an infraction for not having a plumber on a job. He said we need to look at how we're regulating residential plumbing. He added that since the economy turned in 2008, we've had a shortage of plumbers. He added it takes four to five years to train an individual and there are no journeymen out there to hire.

Pat mentioned that he has been receiving solicitation letters from the union. He added that he can't get the information the union has to advertise for employment. Ed said that the union has full time organizers that spend all day working on this. He said they have created their own database over the last fifteen to twenty years. Dean said that we are not supplying anyone with that information.

Margaret mentioned that the plumbing inspectors from Seattle are also encouraging the non-union plumbers to join the union. Ed said that he would address that issue.

Discussion followed.

Fiscal Update

Dean said the fund is still growing. He added he has a meeting set up with Liz Smith, Assistant Director, to discuss changing the allotment and possibly adding more employees.

Evan asked if all of the revenue for the program is generated from licensing fees and infractions. Bruce responded that exam fees are also a revenue source. Dave Weisbeck asked what the pass/fail rate for the exam is. Bruce advised that the journey level exam pass rate is approximately 48% to 58% and the residential specialty exam pass rate is approximately 25% pass rate. Evan asked what resources are available to trainees to prepare them for the exam. Larry responded that CITC has a Journeyman Refresher Course for trainees to prepare them for testing. Pat stated that Bruce Davis also teaches an exam prep class. Larry mentioned that the department should consider having an open book test since the pass rate is so low. Ed mentioned that when he was an apprenticeship coordinator, they gave the apprentices multiple tests to prepare them for the exam. He added there are all kinds of options for helping an individual prepare for the exam.

Discussion followed.

Idaho Reciprocity

Bruce stated that Idaho is the only reciprocal agreement that we currently have. He said that Idaho is only reciprocating Washington plumbers if they have completed an apprenticeship

program. He said he talked with Idaho and was informed that if an individual who was not enrolled in an apprenticeship program wants to become licensed in Idaho they would have to take each year end test for their apprenticeship program and pass it. Then they would allow you to take the state test. Evan suggested that maybe we should do something different. Bruce stated that we don't have a true reciprocal agreement with them.

Discussion followed.

WAC Rule Changes

Dean said that in February we prematurely sent out notification on the list serve that the rules had been adopted. Since then, they have been updated and will take effect on May 16th. He said that the requirement to wear and visibly display the license was changed to read that an individual must possess, and is *encouraged* to wear and visibly the license. Dean stated that we have prepared to track how many individuals are wearing them on jobsites. He added that we want to do more outreach and see if we can come to a voluntary consensus with the industry.

Ed stated that he is extremely disappointed with this decision. He said that he spent a lot of time traveling around the state talking to different organizations about visible licensing. He said everyone he talked to was for the requirement. Ed commented "did we not follow every step of the rule process?"

Evan said that when we started this process, we wanted to solve a problem of how to get better enforcement and for the public to become more aware of who we are. He said we worked with the existing WAC rules to make this change. He said he feels that we have wasted our time. He added that to change the rule we will have to go through the whole WAC rule process again.

Dean said that going forward, we're making changes so that when a compliance inspector checks an individual plumber on a jobsite, we will identify and track whether the person is wearing the license or not.

Discussion followed.

Training for Residential Service Plumbing

Evan said that there is a difference between small residential service and repair plumbing shops and how the state defines plumbers in their regulations. He added now it's a sales and marketing game that is residentially oriented and mass marketed from large out of state corporations and franchises. The service plumber is a different kind of business. Evan said everyone that he knows is afraid to come forward because no one is complying with the rules. There aren't enough plumbers to train the trainees. He said Labor & Industries really needs to listen to this because it's a serious problem.

Margaret stated that business owners are struggling to acquire and maintain quality plumbers. She said that's a huge change for the industry. She said it's extremely challenging to keep a

trainee in a truck with a plumber for four years and train them and then have them leave. She said we need some help.

Pat mentioned getting a group together and go into the high schools to educate and encourage the students to enter the trade. He added there just aren't enough bodies out there. Todd stated that PHCC is going to start an education committee and go into the schools to let the students know that plumbing is an option for them. Ed said that as a training director, he used to go into the schools, all over the state, once a week to educate young people about the trade. He mentioned you should also look at veterans for employment.

Evan reiterated that the training is different for service and repair plumbing. Larry stated that some of us can't put a plumber and a trainee in the truck all the time. He added the training is different; the customer's perception is different. Evan said if you are really going to put a journeyman out there and drive a trainee around, you are going to have to charge the customer a lot more money than they are willing to pay. Evan added to change anything, you have to have legislation.

Discussion followed.

Enforcement of Consumer Protection Laws

Evan said that consumer protection laws really come down to the same issue. He stated that there are those of us that are in the business that play by the rules but we have to compete with those who don't. He added L&I seems to remain neutral on legislation. Ed said that if we want to make changes, it's up to us and we have to make it happen.

Discussion followed.

New Business

Dave Weickum stated that Mike Brewer has decided to step down from his board position.

Todd mentioned that PHCC is in support of a ratio change for a period of time to help the industry. He suggested a sunset clause that would allow a potential ratio change. His suggestion was:

- One Journey Level plumber to two trainees on a commercial jobsite
- One Journey Level or Residential Specialty plumber to three trainees on a residential jobsite

He added it's a way to get more people trained. Ed suggested that the PHCC discusses this with MCA.

Discussion followed.

Motion to adjourn.

