

STATE OF WASHINGTON
ADVISORY BOARD OF PLUMBERS

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

Meeting Minutes January 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

Richard Dixon, Gold Seal Mechanical
Bill Buckingham, South West Plumbing, PHCC
Connie Buckingham, South West Plumbing
Todd Allred, Allred Mechanical Solutions LLC
Pat Dickinson, Service Plumbing & Heating
Larry Fischer, Prima Plumbing

Call to Order

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

Approve Minutes

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the October 20, 2015 meeting minutes as written.

Plumbing Infractions

Bruce reported that there were 146 infractions for the fourth quarter of 2015, totaling \$51,000.00, an increase of 32 infractions from last quarter. Ed asked how the Detection Tracking Unit (DTU)

operates. Bruce explained that DTU monitors advertisements on Craig's list and consumer complaints. Jesse added that the consumer sends in copies of the bids or invoices which show the contractor offered to perform, or charged for plumbing work. Dean added most of the infractions, probably 80%, are issued from the inspectors in the field finding the person on the jobsite performing the work.

Ed said that we had talked at the previous meeting about hiring more full time employees (FTE's) for DTU. Dean said the discussion was about the budget, but going forward into FY17, what do we want to do compliance wise to add additional resources? Ed said he would support any added enforcement or people in the field.

Todd suggested that we look at some public service announcements educating the public what they should be looking for licensing.

Dean said the current allotment pays for 3.7 inspectors in the field and 3 staff in Central Office. He said he would have to ask the legislature to increase the allotment to allow him to spend more from the fund. Dean added he would like to invite Shari Purves-Reiter, our Outreach Manager, to attend our next meeting and share information on what the outreach program does. He mentioned that they hold approximately 25 homes shows each year and offer Contractor Training Events in various locations around the state in an effort to provide consumer education. Dean added public service announcements can be very costly.

Bruce mentioned that he and Jesse offer a class at Contractor Training Days to educate contractors, plumbers, and consumers about the laws in the state. He said one of the biggest issues is the general contractor, who thinks he can do anything, including plumbing. Bill suggested that as a contractor, when you consider marketing, including radio, television, or billboards, you should add "anytime you have a plumber come to your house, please make sure they show you their plumbing license and if they cannot, report them to L & I". He said people need to be trained to ask for the license.

Jesse mentioned that the 75% supervision rate is a constant challenge for the inspectors. Evan asked if there was any leeway with that rule. Jesse said the interpretation is 75% of each jobsite. Bruce said the only way to make it better would require 100% supervision and that would require a legislative change.

Dave Weisbeck asked if DTU is overwhelmed with work. Dean said they are trying to keep up with Craig's List and everything else that is out there, but it is overwhelming. He said he would love to have 10 more FTE's to work in the unit. He added the better we get, the more work we generate. He said in 2008 there were 63,000 contractors and it dropped to 52,000 contractors when the economy turned. Currently we are back up to 60,000 contractors.

Dean said legislation is what we need. He stated he is more than willing to take on a fraud package to add more individuals to keep up with the volume. He mentioned that if he adds more inspectors, that increases the referrals for Audit, Collections, and DOSH. If they don't have the resources to take on the extra work, what do you do?

Pat stated there aren't enough L&I inspectors to go around. He said there are second year trainees running water and no plumbers out there. He said we need to get realistic about what's happening out there and protect what we do.

Discussion followed.

Fiscal Update/Opening Allotment

Dean said the fund is healthy and it's time to start looking at adding more resources. He said he would be happy to start working on a budget package for FY17. He said more than half of our plumbers work in 3 counties; King, Pierce, and Snohomish and half of our compliance inspectors work in those areas as well. Dean added that the inspectors are funded by three different budgets; industrial insurance, plumber certification, and the general fund. He said this is the first year we haven't had to look at a cut in general fund dollars. Last year we were looking at having to cut 6 FTE's.

Ed suggested that the issues with the internet and in the field just keep getting bigger and bigger and anything that can be done to increase staff for the DTU team and the inspectors in the field would be a good idea.

Dean said he supports allocating more funds out of the plumbing account to support compliance. He said he hopes to put a proposal together before the next board meeting.

Idaho Reciprocity

Dean said that we found out that Idaho was no longer allowing our journey level plumbers to reciprocate unless the individual had completed an apprenticeship program. He reported that he and Bruce had spoken with Idaho and they said that they would be looking into a rule change to allow Washington journey level plumbers to reciprocate and they would accept that as reciprocity over the apprenticeship program. He said we will continue to honor the reciprocal agreement for now.

Service Plumbing

Evan said that residential service plumbing is being controlled by huge sales and marketing forces. He said it has nothing to do with licensing, and everything to do with money. He said it has created a huge void in trained people to perform the work. They are being trained in sales and marketing instead. He said these companies have sophisticated websites and pay thousands of dollars for advertising on the internet and he can't afford to compete with them because of his overhead. Evan added that he has tried to track down some of these companies but they have fictional addresses, they don't have business licenses, registration, and not registered with the Secretary of State. He said he's turned them into inspectors but they don't have the tools to track them. He said it's a weakness in our system that you don't have to be a plumber to own a plumbing business.

Ed said the reality is we have to get legislation to change it.

Pat stated that they charge exorbitant fees and don't fix the problem. He said they take advantage of the public. He added it's a cyber-crime. Evan said its fraud and he has turned them into the Attorney General's office but nothing has been done about it. He said someone needs to do a sting to find out who these people are.

Todd asked Evan if he was thinking about a different certification for the service plumber.

Evan said there are a number of issues with residential service plumbing. He said they have a whole different set of issues including consumer safety, licensing, and training. He said it's a different skill set and it isn't practical to have a guy out in a truck training a trainee for 4 years to put in a water heater. He thinks we need to look at the service industry and see how we can we get skilled service people into the trade

Discussion followed.

Visible Licensing Enforcement

Dean said visible licensing becomes effective March 1, 2016. He said he supports education for the first year, but eventually it will become the law of the land. He added that we don't have the ability to issue a warning because of our laws don't provide for that. Dave Weisbeck asked if you could make a copy of the license for the visible display. Dean replied that you can. Bruce said if they use a copy, they had better have the original and governmental photo identification on their person.

Discussion followed.

Plumbing Legislation

Dean said that HB 1465 is a bill concerning creating a dedicated account for Contractor Compliance, Elevators, and Factory Assembled Structures. He urged the group to support it.

He added SB 6226 regarding the IPC would have a major impact on the trade as all plumbers would have to be trained and tested to that code. Dean mentioned that HB 2508 basically says the IPC can be used as an alternate code. Ed added there was a group of eight individuals, including union, non-union, contractors, engineers, MCA, and PHCC that testified against SB 6226.

Ed said that they introduced SB 6278 which was sponsored by Senator Roach. That legislation would:

- Add two individuals to the Advisory Board, one from the code authority and one from the Dept. of Health
- Expand the authority of the Advisory Board
- Double the existing penalties

Larry mentioned that he would like to increase the ratio so that a journey level plumber could supervise two trainees on a commercial jobsite. He added they are running out of plumbers to train and supervise trainees. Larry said that another solution would be to have one journey level plumber and one residential plumber allowed to supervise two trainees on a commercial jobsite. Larry said they would need to get a coalition together and get legislation to accomplish this.

Discussion followed.

New Business

Dean thanked PHCC for putting our compliance inspectors contact list in their quarterly magazine.

Motion to adjourn.