

STATE OF WASHINGTON
ADVISORY BOARD OF PLUMBERS

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

Meeting Minutes July 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
Scott Fowler, Specialty Plumbing Business
Dave Weickum, Specialty Plumber
Linda Houser, Plumbing Business

Department of Labor & Industries

Ernie LaPalm, Deputy Director
Dean Simpson, Chief, Contractor Registration/Plumber Certification/FAS
Bruce Springer, Plumbing Technical Specialist
Jesse Jameson, Contractor Technical Specialist
Jackie Lemons, Plumber Certification Supervisor
Tamara Dunn, Customer Service Specialist

Guests

Tim Downes, UA Local 26 Plumbers & Pipefitters
Jason Howard, UA Local 26 Plumbers & Pipefitters
Brad Moore, Local 32
Tim Bushnell, Bushnell Plumbing
Wiley Cortez, Pricor Technologies
Jason Pritchard, Pricor Technologies
Krista Braaksma, State Building Code Council
Todd Allred, Allred Mechanical Solutions
Krista Allred, Allred Mechanical Solutions
Larry Fischer, Prima Plumbing
Pat Dickinson, Service Plumbing & Heating Inc.
Jim Stack, Stack Plumbing Inc.
Gerald Church, J & K Plumbing Inc.
Bob Larson, Bob Larson Plumbing
Dennis Hamon, Gene Johnson Plumbing
Dan Grossruck, Pipe Guys
Matthew Schmidt, Consumer

Call to Order

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

Approve Minutes

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

Visible Licensing

Ernie LaPalm, Deputy Director, stated that he was here today on behalf of Joel Sacks, Director, Dept. of Labor & Industries, and thanked the Board for allowing him on the agenda. He advised that there was a recent rule change on visible licensing that encourages the individual to wear and visibly display their license on the jobsite.

Ernie said that compliance activity is very important and we take it very seriously. He said the challenge with this rule is that it is already a requirement to have the license and photo identification on your person at the jobsite. He said we are trying to change the behavior on the jobsite using voluntary compliance approaches to start with.

He said Joel has asked him to lead an effort for voluntary compliance which will include:

- Start an outreach effort to get the word out that visible licensing is the best practice. He said the department will spend about \$100,000.00 on a media effort to educate the consumers, but it won't happen until after November because of all the other activities at that time of year.
- Initiate a tracking system to see if the individuals are wearing the visible license on the jobsites.
- Obtain data from the Electrical Program to find out what are we finding on the jobsites regarding visible licensing.

Ernie asked, "What approach should we consider for an industry outreach effort to educate the consumer and change the behavior that visible licensing becomes a standard?"

The suggestions included:

- Educate the plumber as to why visible licensing is a benefit to the industry
- Educate the consumer on the certification process, including amount of hours required, testing, continuing education requirements
- Educate the consumer that plumbing is a health safety issue and the reason there is certification
- Get a banner on Yelp or Google
- Get Jesse Jones

- Target the advertisements during sports events and prime viewing times

Ernie suggested that some of them work with Dean, Bruce, and himself to advise them on what we should be doing to change behavior. He said he would like to get a plan in place on how to move forward. Ernie said he would come back and update them on what we are doing and what we are finding. He added that we need to work with local inspection agencies, WABO, and other groups and get them on board in helping us with the compliance effort.

Discussion followed.

Advisory Board Appointments

Dean introduced Scott Fowler as the newly appointed member on the Advisory Board of Plumbers. Scott is representing the Specialty Plumbing Business position.

Plumbing Infractions

Bruce stated there were 172 infractions written for \$62,750.00 for the second quarter of 2016. He reported that collections on infractions run approximately 75%. Jesse stated that approximately 50% of infractions are written to unsupervised trainees and 50% are written for no certification. Ed mentioned the contractors that are repeat violators need to be addressed because that's the only way we can invoke change. He added it's not fair to the legitimate contractors.

Suggestions included requiring the contractor to display their license numbers on their vehicles. Bruce stated there are exemptions for vehicles, phone books, radio, and television ads under Contractor Registration laws and it would require a legislative change to Chapter 18.27 RCW. He added that Chapter 18.106 RCW, which is the Plumber Certification laws, only deals with the individuals performing the work, not the contractor.

Discussion followed.

Fiscal Update

Dean reported that the fund is doing quite well and he attributed the spike in funds mainly due to the increase in examinations.

Plumber Examinations

Bruce stated that we have had many out of state plumbers coming into the state to work and because of that, the exams having been filling up quickly. Bruce added that the pass rate on the residential exam is low and they test multiple times before they pass. He said that also contributes to the exams filling up. He added the trainees aren't being trained properly. Bruce reported that we have added an additional test date in July to accommodate the influx. Dean added that we are also looking into other options for testing because of the ratio issues.

It was suggested that the exams be contracted out to a third party. Bruce stated that for us to do that, it would cost the applicants considerably more money because they would also have to pay the testing agency.

Other suggestions included:

- Saturday testing at remote locations
- Testing monthly at all of the Labor & Industries offices we currently test at
- Testing at Work Source locations on Saturdays
- Use of volunteers
- A comprehensive online training program so they can pass the exams

Ernie suggested that a committee be formed to continue the discussion about exam options. Jake Tapani, Brad Moore, Scott Fowler, Dennis Hamon, and Jason Howard volunteered to be on the committee.

Discussion followed.

Consumer Education

Evan said we should be working with the consumers because of the fraud that goes on in the industry with uncertified plumbers and unregistered contractors. He suggested that Labor & Industries should be spending money on educating consumers concerning the health and consumer fraud issues associated with unlicensed individuals. He said the real plumbers are falling by the wayside because of sales and marketing people.

Ed mentioned that he and a representative from PHCC would be appearing on a local television talk show to discuss plumbing in Washington. Ed added that the show is about educating the public regarding:

- Plumber certification and licensing requirements
- What a license looks like
- Contractor Registration laws
- How to find licensed plumbers

Discussion followed.

Ratio/Supervision

Evan commented that Labor & Industries has a very rigid definition of supervision. He said the service and repair industry is very different than the commercial industry and the rules don't fit the logistics of how a service and repair business operates. Evan added that he and others in the industry would like to see it changed.

Bruce replied that if you want to change ratio or supervision you have to change the laws and that would require legislation. He added supervision is required 75% of each jobsite within sight and sound.

Discussion followed.

Plumber Licensing Enforcement

Evan said this agenda item crossed over with previous discussion.

New Business

Ed requested that Elizabeth Smith, Assistant Director, Fraud Prevention and Labor Standards, or one of her representatives, attend the next meeting to talk about plumbing fraud and the direction the department is headed.

Todd Allred, Allred's Mechanical Solutions Inc. introduced Matthew Schmidt, a consumer who had purchased a home that had multiple issues, including plumbing. Todd explained what the plumbing issues were and how it was resolved. He added that is what happens when you hire uncertified plumbers.

Evan suggested that the board petition the Governor to evaluate the definition of the board's duties. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to draft a letter to the Governor. Evan stated he would draft a letter and email it to the members. He said he would get feedback and bring it to the next meeting.

Ed said that we tried last year to expand what the board could do through legislation, but it didn't make it out of committee. He added we will try again next session, but we all have to work together as a group. He said he already has appointments set up to discuss the issues with some of the legislators.

Motion to adjourn.