

MINUTES ARE NOT VERBATIM

OKALOOSA COUNTY ELECTRICAL COMPETENCY BOARD

MINUTES

September 7, 2017

The regular meeting of the Okaloosa County Electrical Competency Board was held Thursday, September 7, 2017, 3:00 PM, at the at the Okaloosa County Administration Building, first floor BCC Chambers, 1250 Eglin Parkway N., Shalimar, Florida. Board members in attendance were Brent Smith, Joel Richardson, Debra Ripley, Wayne Barlow, Kenneth King, and Linda Flowers. Edward Cochran, Jr. and Robert Garcia were not in attendance.

Growth Management staff in attendance were Elliot Kampert, Growth Management Director; Tina Ward, Permitting and Licensing Manager; and Karen Rossi, Administrative Assistant II. Assistant County Attorney Kerry Parsons was also in attendance.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Brent Smith called the meeting to order.

A. Roll Call

Ms. Karen Rossi took roll call.

II. ACKNOWLEDGE GUESTS

Chairman Smith welcomed and acknowledged the guest.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: July 6, 2017

Motion to approve the minutes made by Linda Flowers; second by Kenneth King; approved unanimously.

IV. OPEN TO PUBLIC (For any item not Quasi-Judicial on this Agenda)

Mr. Kampert stated that there is no one present, other than staff, who is not on the agenda.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Tina Ward, Permitting and Licensing Manager, informed the Board that they will have a new member, Mr. Jack Mott, who should be seated at the next meeting pending approval by the Board of County Commissioners.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

None

VII. NEW BUSINESS

a. Swearing in Applicants/ Speakers

Ms. Rossi swore in the applicants.

b. Candidate for Testing Approval:

1. David L. McLendon – Master Electrical Contractor

Mr. David McLendon introduced himself to the Board, stating that he is seeking the Board's approval to test for a Master Electrical Contractor's license. Mr. McLendon stated that he was looking forward to taking and passing his exams, noting that he has worked in the electrical field for 30 years. Mr. McLendon further stated that his employers are now asking that he be licensed so it is time to get back to the books and study.

Chairman Smith stated that he had questioned staff regarding Mr. McLendon and was assured by staff that Mr. McLendon met the requirements of the Code.

The Board had no questions for Mr. McLendon.

Motion to approve made by Joel Richardson; second by Kenneth King; approved unanimously.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Discussion on Electrical Ordinance:

Mr. Elliot Kampert addressed the Board, stating that he is present to answer questions regarding the changes in permitting fees. Mr. Kampert stated that he was surprised to learn that some on this Board were upset with the fees, given that the changes were emailed out and staff received no comments back from the Board. Mr. Kampert further stated that presentations were made to Plumbing, Mechanical and Construction Competency Boards and the response was mostly positive, especially the removal of the requirement that all license holders registered with our department must add our department to their insurance as an additional insured. Mr. Kampert stated that the only changes that really affect the license holders on this Board are the temporary pole fee and the fax permit fee. Mr. Kampert explained, in reference the expressed concern over the increase in the fax permit fees, the staff involvement in the fax permit program. Mr. Kampert stated that the permit techs still have to create the permit just as they would with a customer at the counter, but then the permit has to be billed, sometimes more than once, by our Financial Coordinator, who must then wait for payment, deposit and then must reconcile the amount paid with the amount owed and finally the information goes back to the counter techs to update the file. Mr. Kampert further stated that staff is working with the Information Systems Department to replace the fax permit program with online self-permitting for contractors only with a credit card payment system. Mr. Kampert stated that staff has set the first month of the new year as a target for the change-over. Mr. Kampert further stated that it was never his or staff's intent to try to pass the change in permitting fees in an undercover or hidden manner, and he apologized to the Board for any misunderstanding. Mr. Kampert stated that increase in fees has allowed the

department to add another permitting technician, an additional inspector and provides leeway if more staff are needed in the future.

Mr. Kenneth King noted that he had a few questions, and stated that he understands that money is so tight that the employees can't even get a pay raise, and he'd like to see that happen. Mr. King further stated that he has looked through the Ordinance and noted that there doesn't seem to be much of an increase for the General Contractors, just a change in verbiage and he thinks they all should be charged the same amount. Mr. King stated that he had an issue with the increase in re-inspection fees when it is the General Contractor, not the Electrical Contractor, who calls for the inspections, whether or not the work is ready to inspect and the Electrician gets hit with a \$50.00 re-inspection fee for an inspection he didn't request.

Mr. Kampert stated that the issue with the re-inspection fees is a valid point.

A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Joel Richardson stated that the change was made years ago by staff because the builders wanted to make one phone call to get all of the inspections scheduled at one time which also saved on inspector trips to each site. Mr. Richardson further stated that the builders liked getting a punch list of the work that needed to be finished from the inspectors.

Mr. King stated that he believes that the builders should be responsible for all of the re-inspection fees given that they are the ones who call in for inspection

Mr. Kampert stated that the Building Industry Association and the Contractor's Board share a concern about contractors who use the inspections process as a way to do quality control on their jobsites given the limited number of inspectors who are available.

Chairman Smith stated that he agrees with Mr. King concerning the builders being responsible for all of the re-inspection fees given that they are calling in all the sub-contractors inspections, especially as they are the ones ultimately responsible, because they hold all the equity, for all facets of the job.

Mr. King stated that, as an Electrical Contractor, he doesn't want to be if he doesn't ask for it properly, i.e. the service is the part that the utility company attaches to the property stops at the circuit and everything below that is a sub-feed. Mr. King further stated that an Electrical Contractor shouldn't be penalized because the permitting clerk isn't clear on the terminology in terms of pricing a permit. Mr. King provided an example, stating that the permit cost for a sub feed up to 200 amps is \$15.00 over the base fee, while a service is \$125.00 over the base fee.

Mr. Kampert asked where the change should be made, in terms of clarifying what fees should be charged.

Mr. King stated that the information is all in the code; however, a clerk told him that a service for a commercial building is counted as a service fee of \$125.00, however, the work done isn't any different from the work done to a 200 amp residential service. Mr.

King stated that for any property there is one service with feeders running off of that service.

Mr. Wayne Barlow stated that, in an apartment building, there is one service, albeit an 800 amp service and each of the units are fed off of different feeders. Mr. Barlow stated that there is one main service for that building.

Mr. Richardson stated that for apartments, condominiums, etc. there is just one service; however, townhomes are permitted separately; therefore there is one individual service for each townhouse unit. Mr. Richardson further stated that in a 12 unit townhome building a permit is required for each townhome so a base fee and etc. for each townhome; however, with a condo or apartment, there is only one permit required so long as the Electrical Contractor fills the application out correctly.

Mr. Barlow suggest that the Electrical Board should submit a change to this Ordinance to clarify the language; and it would be helpful to add training for the ladies on the counter; because there are some who come in to buy a permit and don't know exactly what they need.

Mr. Kampert stated that maybe what is needed is to change the form and provide more training for the permit technicians.

Mr. King stated that there is a difference in the way temporary poles are handled between residential and commercial jobs, yet the cost of putting in a temporary pole is the same for either situation unless the service is for a very large jobsite.

Mr. Barlow stated that if the Board could just put their heads together, they could add some definitions, etc. that would make the situation better.

Mr. Kampert noted that the Board should be careful not to violate the Sunshine Law.

Chairman Smith agreed with Mr. Kampert that everything should be discussed in the Sunshine.

Assistant County Attorney Kerry Parsons noted that the Board must abide by the Sunshine Law; however, if one Board member chooses to work with staff to put some of these suggestions together, the resulting information could be presented to the Board at a future meeting.

Mr. Barlow stated that each Board member could take a copy of the form home and make changes to be presented, and so long as they don't speak to each other about it, there wouldn't be a Sunshine violation.

Attorney Parsons stated that, so long as they don't communicate with each other in any way regarding the form, it would not be a violation of the Sunshine Law.

Mr. Kampert asked the Board to send their suggested changes to him.

Mr. Barlow stated that the only issue he has regards the graduated re-inspection fees, then tell the inspectors to cite all the issues they find; instead of finding new issues on the second inspection which used to be a real issue.

Mr. Kampert stated that staff has the philosophy from plan review on down, that everything should be noted at the beginning, and if that sort of issue becomes a problem, then it will be taken care of. Mr. Kampert further stated that staff's intent in raising the re-inspection fees was to stop those contractors who use the inspectors as their quality control, with 3 or more inspections on each permit.

Mr. King stated that he would like see enough money generated to give raises to all of the current staff and allow for the hiring of more. Mr. King further stated that his issue isn't the cost of the permits so much as the uneven way it is handled between the trades. Mr. King clarified his statement, stating that he feels that the plumbing and mechanical contractors have not seen increases to the same extent that the Electrical and General Contractors have seen increases based on this new fee schedule and, he would like to see the trades treated more equitably.

Mr. Kampert stated that the base fee was increased, there were changes to the fees for temporary poles, fax fees and re-inspections. Mr. Kampert further stated that the changes for Mechanical Contractors were made so that staff could get away from requiring that the Mechanical Contractors provide a copy of their contract in order to get a permit. Mr. Kampert stated that the Department is going to have to spend some money to upgrade programs, although staff is trying to be very conservative in terms of spending.

Mr. King stated that he believes that the Electrical trade ends up paying more than the other trades in terms of permitting fees, so he suggests raising the fees for the other trades.

Ms. Debra Ripley stated that she didn't see the fee list sent by email, but her alarm systems also have a plan review fee, and it is important to know what all of the fees will be as those fees are incorporated into the charge to the customer.

Mr. Richardson stated that he saw the email and doesn't remember anything about sending comments back. Mr. Richardson asked why the Electrical Board didn't get a chance to discuss it before it was adopted.

Mr. Kampert stated that the intent of the email was to gather comments and concerns; however, all of the issues presented at this meeting will be looked at by staff, with changes made where necessary.

Mr. Richardson stated that he was the person who brought up the issue with the increase in fax fees and he still disagrees with the increase because he still feels that the fax program provides benefit to both sides in that he doesn't tie up a permit tech with 10 permits that have to be issued right then, as opposed to 10 permits through the fax program that they can do in between customers.

Mr. Kampert stated that the increased fee for faxes is based on the cost of the number of different employees that have to be involved in terms of processing mail and billing.

Mr. Richardson stated that the online permitting will solve some of those issues but asked if credit card payments could be made for fax permits now.

Mr. Kampert stated that staff cannot take credit card payments over the phone due to security issues and liability issues.

Mr. Richardson noted that in other jurisdictions he can provide his credit card number and those jurisdictions will charge his card and take care of the payment that way.

Attorney Parsons noted that there is an issue with the credit card number becoming a public record at this time as well. Attorney Parsons stated that the credit card information would have to be redacted by hand.

Mr. Kampert stated that there would be more staff time involved in that process; however, he will speak with Risk Management to see if that is an option the County wishes to take.

Mr. Richardson stated that perhaps they could keep the credit information on file; just as they used to be able to put and keep money on account to pay the fees so that the billing portion wasn't so much of an issue.

Mr. Kampert noted that there are still a couple of older accounts that have money pending in them, which drives the Finance Department a bit crazy. Mr. Kampert stated that, as he understands it, the issues he needs to take a look at are:

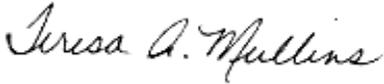
- Re-Inspection fees for Sub-contractors who cannot schedule the inspections.
- Look at the comparative costs per trades.
- Look at the issue with Electrical Service charges i.e. townhomes, commercial & residential.

Mr. Kampert further stated that the intent of the permitting fees is to cover the costs of permitting and inspections. Mr. Kampert further stated that the Board could send their suggestions to him or to Ms. Ward so that staff can look at what can be done. Mr. Kampert reminded the Board members not to discuss the issues amongst themselves outside of these public meetings to avoid violating the Sunshine Law.

A brief discussion ensued.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn and request Mr. Kampert & Ms. Ward to attend the next meeting made by Kenneth King; second by Wayne Barlow; approved unanimously.

Prepared by: 

Teresa A. Mullins, Recording Secretary
9.12.2017