

COCO/Joint Associations Emergency Meeting on HB548

Meeting Minutes

January 12, 2016

PRESENT:

NCBIA: Dan Dockery, Tom Brown, Jeff Griffin, Michael Rittee, Glenn Batten, Amy Britt, Jack Newsome, Barry Gupton, Jim Roberson, Carl Martin, James Rhodes

NCIAEI: John West, Mitchell Bryant, Chris Faucette, Thomas Green, Pat Rose, Michael Caudle

NCMIA: Darrel Johnson, Dick Flowers, Alex Ellis, Alec Auther, Allen Cooley

NCPIA: Todd Mahan, Michael Crofts, Casey Gerringier, John Kinder, Jim Lawson, Bill Moeller

NCOSFM: Chris Noles

NCLOM: Erin Wynia

1. PURPOSE

To discuss the impact and current efforts to consolidate general statutes related to code enforcement activity in NC into new statute GS 160 D. Additional items discussed included ways to improve the image of Inspection Department's and consistency across the State.

2. GREETING/INTRODUCTION

Greeting was made by Dan Dockery with the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Inspection Department who hosted the event which was held at the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Inspections Office, 100 E. First Street, Winston-Salem NC at 10:00am on January 12th, 2016. Introductions were made by all 26 individuals in attendance which included members of the various associations' boards, NCDI and a guest speaker from the League of Municipality.

3. DISCUSSION

- Opening by Dan Dockery with discussions on how do we make our voice heard for the Citizens of NC and the communities we serve? It was noted that 30% of inspectors will be retiring in next 5 years & 80% within the next 10 years, what's the legacy we leave behind? How do we make an impact for the next generation of inspectors that will take over, one key discussed was educating those that need to know about how vital of a role an inspector has dealing with public safety? Question was asked "how many jurisdictions advertised or had a declaration from their elected officials when the public safety month came around in May of 2015", very few attendees indicated they had support. ICC will be creating on their website a mapping of jurisdictions who make declarations for building safety month to track how this message is getting out there and who is participating. This year marks the 36th year

celebrating Building Safety Month and additional information is already available on ICC for 2016 at : <http://www.iccsafe.org/about-icc/building-safety-month/2016-building-safety-month/>

- Erin Wynia was introduced, she is the legislative Counsel for the League of Municipalities. Erin discussed the role of the League (<http://www.nclm.org/legislative-advocacy/about/Pages/default.aspx>) and what she does for the organization. She has been very active in trying to work with several sponsors on bills that impact municipalities and has worked with HBA recently on the many proposals they have tried to get passed, she acknowledged that HBA has significant influence and political impact on changes being made. She was asked how we get our upper management (mainly elected officials) to understand what we do, is the League doing any advertising or promotions that would be helpful and if they have had any success with trying to work with HBA. Erin discussed their new Directors efforts including some advertising and promotions that will be coming out soon. She also discussed how they have tried to work with HBA to provide input to achieve a successful outcome on many of the bills that are impacting our area of government services. It was noted in the discussion that there is little or no input being ask for from Code Officials who deal with these legislative issues on a regular basis and the impact that it has on the industry at large. She indicated that there had been some success in working with HBA including as an example the recent efforts on the new subdivision requirements for mailbox kiosks. Question was asked as to how many jurisdictions try to reach out to their local HBA associations by providing continued education or working on consistency issues, many of the jurisdictions indicated that they have some programs designed to reach out to the industry and engage them on code issues, also noted that many local HBA are unaware of what the NCHBA (State level) is doing in presenting them or have no voice at the State level. How do we get our local HBA to be advocates in what we do to support us at the State level or with our upper management? Jurisdictions were encouraged to reach out to their local HBA's to build strong working relationships for our communities. Question was raised about SB25 (restrictions on zoning) is there any chance that this might go back to the legislature because it's too restrictive. Erin indicated that of all the bills that they tried to work on this had the least chance of changing anything than any other bill. Right now she recommended that trying to do anything on this bill right now might have even a more negative impact effecting other areas. Question asked if there will be additional changes to HB548 when brought back to the legislature, Chris Noles responded and indicated that he believes right now there would be no additional or minor only changes when brought back. Erin's indicated she had recent conversations with HBA and others and would be surprised if it went forward april even with committee work however she indicated that 4 attorney's had put hundreds of hours into this proposal and she doesn't think they are going to walk away from it. If it doesn't come back in April she believes it will still come back at some point. Even though many say they would not support any changes to current language (this was supposed to be is why they re-structure of current language into GS160D for both Cities and Counties) they may not catch any significant changes when this comes back in. Erin indicated that she spoke with an attorney out of Wilmington who is also senator and works in this area dealing with contractors. He indicated that the problem at the legislative level is that there is just too few people that really care about these issues and it would be easy to push through this very large bill. Erin said that the League was not consulted on this bill and if she had been asked based upon the current climate at the State level she would have advised that this is not the right time to push this bill through. In additional to watching what happens in April she mentioned is that there has been some acknowledgement that HBA has 86 changes they would like to see to this Bill (GS 160 D). Erin also indicate that representative Brody has

4 Bills ready to go when the session comes back as well which they are not sure what those bills cover. We need to be prepared to have a collective voice in what may be presented down in April or later sessions. Erin was only able to attend the first part of the meeting but her efforts and information to the group was greatly appreciated. Additional information related to the discussion:

Erin's contact information is:

[Erin Wynia](#), *Legislative Counsel*

Phone: 919-715-4126

Fax: 919-301-1089

Mobile: 919-961-610

League website: www.nclm.org

HB25 bill information:

<http://www.nclm.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/Legislative/2015%20Issue%20Briefs/Building%20Design%20Controls%20Issue%20Brief2015.pdf>

HB548 current bill info:

<http://ncleg.net/gascripts/BillLookUp/BillLookUp.pl?Session=2015&BillID=hb548>

- Group discussion - How are we going to define who we are and make an impact, or will be leave it up to attorneys to simply work through the problems locally? The only way we have to do that together to make any difference. Everyone needs to read GS160D and look at small things like definitions, the definition of permits was looked at and the potential way it now reads can impact how we do business. Chris Noles also reviewed some of the language in HB255 and how bad the language is that most are unsure of how sections of this might be enforced on code officials. Dan Dockery asked do we stay in the fight and if so we need people willing to be vocal and get to in front of the legislature or do what we can to oppose these poorly written bills from gaining ground. DOI staff cannot carry the issues it will have to come from the efforts of the League and the various associations. We need to pick what we can do and follow through on those efforts. Concern was also mentioned about how much of the efforts seem to be pushing towards private inspections and a recent issue/concern with a private company conducting inspections. This is not the way we need to go for the protection of the citizens of NC so what can we do?

4. ACTION ITEMS-raising the bar for Code Enforcement Officials

- a. Get the word out in a positive way to our elected officials and communities on what do and showcase the value of how we protect the public. Come up with different ways some might be as simple as newsletters or public education CE classes that build positive relations. Another example is create a special program that builds interest in your Departments like Mecklenburg County's "Building with Veterans Program" that partners with Veterans services and Central Piedmont Community College to train veterans in a new career path as code officials.

<http://charmeck.org/mecklenburg/county/CommunitySupportServices/VeteransServices/Pages/Building-With-Our-Veterans.aspx>

- b. Look at possible changing our names from code enforcement officials to Building Safety Officials or other simple things we can do to improve our image and value in the industry.

- c. Develop videos that showcase our services and post those on our websites, association websites and a COCO website. Videos could also be used at various Inspector Departments who have customer lobby monitors or on the departments websites.
- d. Read and be ready to respond to GS160D and what comes in April, if you can attend sessions be prepared to contribute in a way that will make a difference. Reference made on how fire departments showed up in numbers on past issues before the legislature and their concerns were heard. To turn some of this around we will need to show a consolidate stand and in numbers, associations need to support COCO and ramp up a consolidate voice.
- e. We need to educate everyone across the State and work on consistency not just in our departments. One way recommend was when each board meets quarterly a group within the associations brings in their top 10 consistency items, perhaps those that are discussed in many of the jurisdiction meetings. Then discuss each item to develop a consensus at the association level (DOI is present also for these board discussions). An opinion is then given in a format that includes possible photos and items are used for training sessions across the State. In addition the boards forward that information to COCO to have these also present on a COCO website so that there is more resources available to code officials across the State. Associations need to be active in present specific consistency issues to raise the bar on how the codes are enforced across the State. The next meeting of the COCO Board is in March and it was asked if this issue could be present to the Board. Various board members present that volunteered to take the lead on this issue and develop consistency items are highlighted at the top of the page.
- f. Create training that provides inspectors with the soft skills needed to perform the job well. This was discussed that Chris is working on with some information from jurisdictions a class that may be 6 or 8 hours and could even be longer. Thoughts are that the Q-board may make some classes like this one a CE mandatory class. Chris introduced this as the 7- C's and indicated that Dan and possible other code officials might help with teaching this class. The 7-C's are: Context, Communication, Consequences, Consistent, compassionate, character, customer service. More to come on this class that will cover those soft skills for code officials.
- g. Discussed possible meeting more often all associations to deal with these issues that impact us all, one thought was have a meeting at the same time and location once or more a year so that the associations can have their individual meetings however add a collective group COCO meeting. This will go to the COCO board in March to see if this can be agreed to and how often.
- h. More diversity in our work force is needed across the board as we move forward and reach out to all citizens within our communities.
- i. Promote building safety month and safety in general, how we protect the public, as a possible additional example see information below which has a significant amount of information dealing with public safety. Creating some stories like found at the top of this page or information how inspectors assist in disaster response, these are great stories to send to your representative as well:

<http://www.iccsafe.org/Safety/>

- j. Raise the bar by recommending appearance of code officials and create options like a COCO shirt that also recognizes the individual association. This could be the COCO log with the specific association listed underneath. Recommend COCO board to review this option their next meeting.
- k. Provide contractors with CE classes or have regular consistency meetings with the industry, make inroads to your local HBA and get them to be an advocate for what we do as we help our local HBA associations.
- l. Get the word out to each member in every association, communication is key to making sure our issues and concerns are heard.