

Minutes of the Heating Advisory Committee
August 21, 2008

Members present: Omer Beaudoin, Jeffery Cyr, Alan Davis, Steve Dumais, Al Little, Lyndon Rickards

Interested members of the community present: None

The committee discussed the way meetings are conducted. The goal was to find a way to conduct meetings that allowed the committee to act in an efficient manner, yet was fair to members of the public. It was particularly important to have all of the committee members present hear the public comments.

To accomplish the goals mentioned above the committee adopted the following rules:

- 1 Limit meetings to 1 ½ hours.
- 2 Establish a quorum as 1/3 of the total committee membership.
- 3 Establish a public comment time of 15 minutes at the end of the meeting. (Note this time is within the 1 ½ hour time limit. Therefore all committee members present will be able to hear the public comments.)
- 4 Basic meeting outline: Attendance, minutes, old business, new business, and public comment.

The committee discussed the make up of the new committee that would be formed on January 1, 2009. The chairman expressed his dismay at the loss of expertise. He mentioned that the present committee structure gave him depth of expertise. Thus if one member were absent, there was usually another member present with the needed expertise.

Once again the committee discussed lowering the fee for voluntary certification of oil heat technicians to less than \$50 for two years. Some of the stumbling blocks that make it difficult to lower the fee are: The current budget is based on the idea that all hours worked would be directed to the gas program as that is the source of funds. No one is assigned to the voluntary certification program. Right now the Fire Marshal's Office is concentrating on licensing 6,000 gas technicians to follow the law. Currently we do not know how many people will apply for the voluntary oil heat technician certificate.

Some suggestions made to improve participation in the voluntary oil heat technician program were: to move to a mechanical license with endorsements, require the voluntary certificate as NFPA 31 says technicians must be qualified, and add an experienced technician route similar to that found in the gas license.

The committee members felt these were not good ideas. The purpose of voluntary certification was to help the public figure out who had the knowledge to work on oil fired heating systems. Thus the only route to certification should require a technician to demonstrate his/her knowledge through testing. Because the program is voluntary there is no need to offer an alternate route. Furthermore the program was voluntary because there is not the support within the industry for mandatory licensing.

The consensus of the committee was that lowering the fee to \$50 or less for two years and no additional fees for endorsements would make the program more attractive to technicians. Furthermore publicizing the voluntary certificate to company owners, building officials, and the general public would create a demand for certified technicians much the same as has happened in the automotive industry with ASE.

The committee members asked Jeff Cyr to forward our recommendation to the Fire Marshal.

Currently the rules for corporate licensing are being worked on. However there are some problems with the law, SB 346 FN. The intent of the law was to issue a corporate license for free to one person companies (sole proprietorships) and to charge companies with more than one employee. However the law was written using the term, corporations owned by one person. This will include many medium and large companies where all of the stock is held by one person. Another problem with the law is the requirement that an officer must hold a service technician's license (natural gas or propane as appropriate). This will create problems for piping only companies, installation only companies, and hearth system only companies.

The next meeting of the Heating Advisory Committee will be on Thursday, September 18, at 4:00 PM, at the Fire Academy. Joe Rose from PGANE will present information about a NFPA 54 test that will offer an alternative to the 8 hour NFPA 54 class for those who are being licensed through the existing technician route. We will also review the corporate licensing and the gas licensing laws and recommend changes (example: the part that allows tenants to perform gas work and the requirements for continuing education of licensed gas technicians.).