

CITY OF AUBURN
EXAMINING BOARD OF PLUMBERS
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2013

Members Present: Mr. Frank Siracusa, Mr. Greg Gallinger, Mr. Steve Bianco, Mr. Carl Castiglione, Mr. Bill Orman

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Kim Bauso, Brian Hicks

Frank Siracusa called the meeting to order on Tuesday, December 10, 2013 at 5:00 p.m.

Mr. Siracusa: Everyone look over the minutes from the last meeting? I'll make a motion to accept them.

[Minutes accepted.]

Mr. Siracusa: Now we have a letter here that was in your minutes. Everyone see it?

Mr. Bianco: Yes, where Jane is stepping down.

Mr. Orman: Kim.

Mr. Siracusa: Kim is going to resign from the secretary to the Board and Alicia, is it, is going to take over?

Kim Bauso: Alicia McKeen from the Planning Department.

Mr. Siracusa: Okay, Steve, you got the most books in front of you. You must have a lot of problems so we'll start with you.

Mr. Bianco: I got a letter here from the water department regarding the meters. They're replacing the meters, is that something that could've been done by local licensed plumbers?

Mr. Siracusa: It depends what they're replacing.

Mr. Bianco: They're hiring an outside company to come in and do them. There's over 5,200 meters being replaced. Now we were talking before about giving the work away to outsiders, I thought this would be a good place to start.

Mr. Orman: What is that? Can I see that? You got that as a homeowner?

Mr. Siracusa: Yeah, I got that too. Everybody got that.

Mr. Bianco: They're changing all the water meters again and it looks like they're going to hire an outside source to come in and do it. Didn't know if we could bring this up to the City Manager. Trying to keep the work local. Maybe they're going to provide the meters too? Is that why they're going to put them in? These are questions I'd like to find out about.

Mr. Siracusa: Carl, can you look into that?

Mr. Bianco: Plumbers install meters all the time so...

Mr. Siracusa: You haven't heard anything about it then, Carl? Brian?

Mr. Hicks: The only thing I'm aware of is that all water meters in the City of Auburn will be changed and I believe the City is footing the bill for that upgrade. They've contracted with this firm to do it.

Mr. Bianco: Says the company is InLine Services, Inc.

Mr. Orman: Are they going to be aware that they can't do anything besides just put those meters in? Is this company strictly a meter company?

Mr. Hicks: That is all they're contracted to do.

Mr. Orman: What happens if they go to install and they find an old meter with a horse shoe tail piece and it breaks, what happens there? Where does their responsibility end and start?

Mr. Hicks: Most likely in the situations where it looks like it's going to be more than just a switch out, at that point, the homeowner would be told to contact a licensed plumber.

Mr. Orman: So it sounds like, anything more than a simple change out will be the homeowner's responsibility?

Mr. Bianco: Did the City look into this done locally?

Mr. Hicks: I think it was done on a different level than that?

Mr. Siracusa: Is this company furnishing the meters too?

Mr. Hicks: No, I don't believe so. My understanding they were contracted to install them. That's it.

Mr. Orman: Did anybody hear about this prior to getting the letter? Has anyone asked if a license is needed to do this install? This company had to bid the job.

Mr. Bianco: Yeah, exactly, they hire this company to install all these meters, are they licensed at all? InLine Services? Or are they even plumbers?

Mr. Siracusa: I don't even think it was brought before the Council to tell you the truth.

Mr. Hicks: It was but it was probably over a year ago.

Mr. Bianco: This is something we'd definitely like to talk to the Council about or the City Manager.

Mr. Gallinger: You'd have thought they'd have come to the Plumbing Board.

Mr. Bianco: Do you know if this is all residential or commercial too?

Mr. Hicks: There's commercial in there too.

Mr. Bianco: A lot of meters were done in the last few years had to be done because of the backflow. What happens to those people? They have to be done again?

Mr. Hicks: They do. They're changing them all.

Mr. Bianco: Really. There's some good sized meters out there. Wow.

Mr. Siracusa: And the City's footing the bill for the new meters?

Mr. Hicks: I'm not quite sure how this is all coming down through but I think so.

Mr. Bianco: I've done some meters that were 3" and 4" and they were very costly at the time. Just not even a year ago. The other thing, Brian, getting back to the building permits, I brought it up before, is this the Citizen coming in to get the permits?

Mr. Hicks: Yes.

Mr. Bianco: Why is it only just in the entire City there's only a sprinkling of building permits? Is that all you got down there?

Mr. Hicks: No.

Mr. Bianco: How come they only advertise a few of them then?

Mr. Hicks: My understanding is they run out of room. They put in the majority of them, whatever they have room for.

Mr. Bianco: Well, one week they had like three and this last one was like seven. It's in the Citizen. I watch it every week. It's just gotten smaller and smaller. Is that because you're closed? No? You're doing the same amount of permits so you say, right?

Mr. Hicks: On average, we're right in line with what we've always done. The Citizen comes in to our office when we're there and gets them by the week and they only print what the paper will give them room to print.

Mr. Bianco: You've never seen this, Frank? It's in Sunday in the real estate section. Seems like it's getting smaller and smaller to me. So you say they come in every week?

Kim Bauso: *Typically* every week.

[Miscellaneous discussion pertaining to new theater project.]

Mr. Siracusa: Okay, Steve, you all set now?

Mr. Bianco: I was talking to Joe D'Onofrio and he couldn't be here tonight but he did mention that he was talking to the college BOCES about starting up a new school. A plumbing school. He wanted me to mention it to the Board. Might be good to get something like that going.

Mr. Orman: There was something like that a long time ago. Volunteers taught like a night class. Didn't last very long though. Do you remember that, Frank? They still do the heating and the electrical I believe.

Mr. Bianco: Joe's got a mechanicals degree I guess. His license would cover this so the school is willing to donate the space to get this going. Just got to get people interested in it. I would send my apprentices to the program if we had one here.

Mr. Siracusa: Greg? Carl?

Mr. Orman: The people who want to do sewer and water lines and they want to put them on the taxes. When they go to the City to get the application, are they required to get three bids?

Mr. Bianco: They don't have to get three. It's totally up to the customer and they never get three. That's a problem.

Mr. Castiglione: They would like to see three bids.

Mr. Bianco: The customer is ultimately paying the bill. It's up to the customer. If they're too lazy to get three estimates then it's really their fault. It is one of their rules but no one seems to follow it. I started that program with Bruce Ross probably twenty years ago now. Until recently, they stopped the sewer program. They'd run out of funding.

Mr. Orman: So it's suggested but it's not a requirement that they get three.

Mr. Bianco: First year ever they ran out for funding for sewers. Does that run calendar year?

Mr. Hicks: Budget year, July.

Mr. Orman: My point is if the City is fronting the money, I can't believe that they would allow anything to go on without three independent bids.

Mr. Bianco: It is one of the rules. I don't think they enforce that. That should be enforced. Especially with some of the bills getting out of hand.

Mr. Orman: You heard that from the Engineering Department?

Mr. Bianco: Yeah, clearly there's people out there over-billing. Charging two and three times the average guy. I looked into this for a customer and they were denied because of no funds so that's what's going on up on the third floor.

Mr. Siracusa: Is there anything else? Brian, do you have anything?

Mr. Hicks: I had a conversation with a guy who does property maintenance now in the City and he'd like to get into doing HVAC and he'd also like to get involved in doing plumbing work. He realizes that the criteria needed to take the exam, he can't supply. He can't show he's been a Journeyman anywhere but he feels as if his background and history, he could pass the exam. The smartest thing he could possibly do, I told him to come talk to the Board. Show you the credentials that he does have, the years of experience and see what his options are.

Mr. Siracusa: We had the same situation about two years ago. Someone from Union Springs if I'm not mistaken and we didn't let him take the exam because he didn't work for a licensed plumber. Beyond that, I can't tell you anything else. I'm not going to bend the rules, especially now. We didn't do it for that guy, we won't do it for this guy.

Mr. Hicks: I remember a guy from Union Springs who worked for his father but his father didn't hold the master's license.

Mr. Siracusa: That's the guy.

Mr. Bianco: That was denied.

Mr. Siracusa: Okay, that it?

Mr. Bianco: I got one more question here, Carl, how open is gas piping in the City? Because that's in the Plumbing Code. Can anybody do that?

Mr. Castiglione: No. Got to be a plumber. What we do is the heating contractor, he'll reconnect the gas lines in, put a new whip in, on the furnace. He can't run them through the house. Whether it's residential or commercial, it has to be a licensed plumber.

Mr. Siracusa: Anyways....well Kim, sorry to see you go. But as of the first of the year, Kim will no longer be with us and I want to thank you for your time you spent here. Alicia, looking forward to seeing you at the next meeting. Merry Christmas and Happy New year to all of you.

Kim Bauso: The next meeting is going to be January 14th.

[Meeting was adjourned but had to be opened back up again for one last matter.]

Mr. Siracusa: Brian has something to say.

Mr. Hicks: We've got a situation with our budget lines and since there is not enough money to staff a secretary for the position on this Board, it has been suggested that you hold quarterly meetings or have them every other month. Quarterly would be highly suggested.

Mr. Bianco: Can I ask how much it costs to fund this hour that we're together?

Mr. Hicks: It's not so much this one hour. It's the time it takes to put the minutes together and all documentation that has to be filed after the meeting, the prep for public notice for the meeting so it is more timely...one of the biggest problems we have with this Board is we tend to have three people

speaking at the same time which you don't get in any other meetings so it can be easier to put the meeting into print. Playing the tape backwards several different times in order to get all that's said. In most meetings, one person has the floor to speak then chance for rebuttals are given so it's been very time consuming for the secretarial end of this Board. Since we're out of money on this line, that's why this was suggested.

Mr. Orman: What's the Electrical Board secretary get, Brian?

Mr. Hicks: The Electrical Board doesn't meet for three months in the summer...

Mr. Bianco: Neither do we.

Mr. Hicks: In their case, the meetings are a little bit more concise. Biggest time involved in that is when we do the exam and the secretary is not involved in that.

Mr. Siracusa: So what you're saying basically is Steve's talking, and Greg's talking it gets confusing in making the minutes up?

Mr. Bianco: Why can't that be corrected now that we know about it? This has never been an issue before. Brian, I don't understand. Where's this all coming from?

Mr. Hicks: It's coming from, we're out of money.

Mr. Bianco: But why this Board? Why not the Electrical Board? Why not other Boards?

Mr. Hicks: Your line item is depleted. The Electrical Board's line item is not depleted.

Mr. Siracusa: What's the difference between the two?

Mr. Hicks: I have that information in the office but I don't have it in front of me.

Alicia McKeen: One hour meeting in verbatim minutes takes four hours. That doesn't include the preparation for the meeting and follow up.

Mr. Bianco: Alicia, you ever read our minutes? These are like two pages long. We can't be taking that much time from any budget. It's foolish.

Alicia McKeen: I'm just telling you how long it takes.

Kim Bauso: It takes me four hours total a month. For everything. That's one hour for my meeting. Two hours to type the minutes and an hour for all the prep and follow up correspondence.

Mr. Bianco: It doesn't take that much.

Kim Bauso: And you have never had minutes from me that are two pages. I believe normal is 6-8 pages. I didn't get paid for this! I got comp time. I wasn't even getting a salary for this! You guys don't have a salary line in your budget for a secretary and you haven't since Jane Westlake left. I don't even know how you did it then.

Mr. Bianco: Do we have to have a secretary, Brian? Do we need to do minutes?

Mr. Hicks: Yes. It's an Open Public Meeting.

Mr. Bianco: What would it cost to pay for the minutes if we wanted to raise the money?

Mr. Hicks: I don't know.

Mr. Bianco: Well is that their complaint? The minutes?

Mr. Hicks: No. It's the fact we don't have money in the budget line.

Mr. Orman: So the Plumbing Board has a budget. The Electrical Board has a budget. The Neighborhood...what's that one?

Mr. Hicks: Housing Commission.

Mr. Orman: Do they have a budget?

Mr. Hicks: No.

Kim Bauso: Arlene Ryan is their secretary. She's a volunteer, resident of Orchard St.

Mr. Bianco: So if we get a volunteer the Board can still continue?

Mr. Hicks: The Board can still continue but they want you to be quarterly.

Mr. Bianco: Well if they have a volunteer secretary why can't we?

Mr. Hicks: They're not a Board. It's a commission.

Mr. Orman: Can you bring something to the January meeting regarding the two budgets?

Mr. Siracusa: When do they want to start this? We can discuss this again at the January meeting? Did they give you a time limit?

Mr. Hicks: It was to be introduced this evening and I'm not really sure when it will get implemented. Early in the new year. Carl, I'll give you that information and you can contact the Board members?

Mr. Siracusa: If we say we'll do every two months will they step in and say they want quarterly? Would it make any difference if we say okay, every two months?

Mr. Hicks: I'll make that suggestion to my supervisor and then go from there.

Mr. Orman: What do we take off in the summer?

Kim Bauso: Three months. June, July, August, no meeting.

Mr. Siracusa: I'd still like to know the difference in the budgets.

Mr. Bianco: Me too. I don't understand where they're coming from.

Mr. Hicks: They're cutting from everywhere.

Mr. Siracusa: Okay, then.

Meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

