

Washington State Home Inspector Advisory Licensing Board meeting transcript - September 19, 2024

Sandy Baur (00:00:04):

The recording is started.

Lisa Lotus (00:00:07):

Sorry. We're in the office and sometimes our internet takes a second to start. But we're good.

Jon Ashlock (00:00:14):

No problem. All right. Good morning. I'm Jon Ashlock, Chair of the Home Inspector Advisory Licensing Board. It is now 10:00 AM on Thursday, September 19, 2024, and I am calling this meeting to order. This meeting is open to the public and we will take the time at the end of the meeting for a brief public comment period. Participants will have no more than three minutes to address the board. As a reminder, board members are not to engage in the conversation during public comments. As a courtesy, I ask all participants to keep themselves on mute to reduce background noise. When a board member would like to comment on a topic, please use the raise hand feature in Teams. Once I have called on you, unmute yourself and state your name before sharing your comments. Please remember to mute yourself again after you finish speaking. Thank you.

(00:01:01):

Roll call. Program specialist, Sandra Schaefer will now call roll call, confirming board members attendance. Once she has called your name, please respond, stating here or present. Sandra?

Sandra Schaefer (00:01:12):

Thank you. I'll start with you, Chair Ashlock.

Jon Ashlock (00:01:13):

Here.

Sandra Schaefer (00:01:16):

Vice Chair Howard?

Jordan Howard (00:01:18):

Present.

Sandra Schaefer (00:01:20):

Board Member Barbour?

Brad Barbour (00:01:21):

Here.

Sandra Schaefer (00:01:23):

Board Member Lotus?

Lisa Lotus (00:01:26):

Present.

Sandra Schaefer (00:01:27):

Thank you. Board Member McFeeley?

Austin McFeeley (00:01:30):

Present.

Sandra Schaefer (00:01:31):

Thank you. Board Member Thompson?

Glen Thompson (00:01:33):

Here.

Sandra Schaefer (00:01:35):

Thank you. And board Member Tryon?

Warren Tryon (00:01:37):

Present.

Sandra Schaefer (00:01:39):

Perfect. And back to you.

Jon Ashlock (00:01:42):

Thank you. Approval of the agenda, today's agenda. Is there a motion to approve today's agenda as presented?

Warren Tryon (00:01:53):

I motion to approve.

Jon Ashlock (00:01:56):

Who is that?

Jordan Howard (00:01:57):

Jordan Howard, I second

Jon Ashlock (00:02:01):

All right. Any discussion? All those in favor?

Board Members (00:02:09):

Aye.

Jon Ashlock (00:02:10):

All those opposed? And [inaudible 00:02:16]. Excellent. All right, the motion to approve the agenda as presented has been approved. Approval of the June 27th, 2024 minutes. Is there a motion to approve the minutes from June 27th, 2024 as presented?

Glen Thompson (00:02:32):

Board Member Thompson, I approve the minutes. I make a motion to approve the minutes.

Jon Ashlock (00:02:39):

Is there a second?

Jordan Howard (00:02:41):

Jordan Howard, I second.

Jon Ashlock (00:02:46):

Thank you, Jordan. Any discussion? All right. All those in favor, say aye.

Board Members (00:02:54):

Aye.

Jon Ashlock (00:02:56):

All those a opposed say nay. Any abstentions. Aye, myself. I was not there. The minutes have been approved. Moving on. We're just cruising down this list right now. Awards and recognition. There are no awards or recognitions to discuss today. Old business. There is no old business to discuss today on today's agenda. New business, Mrs. Baur. Would you like to introduce Jason Lin for the military and military spouse liaison?

Sandy Baur (00:03:35):

Yes. As you know, last year we brought in Mr. Lin to come in and work with licensed reciprocity through military and military spouses that were moving to Washington State. And at this time I'd like to turn it over to Mr. Lin to give you an update on what he's been doing so far.

Jason Lin (00:03:57):

Thank you, Sandy. I appreciate everybody for allowing me to come here and just spend a few minutes talking about what we're doing for our military community in terms of reciprocity or license transfer here to Washington State. So when I came on last year, we were working with the Washington Law in implementing processes that allow us to expedite licensure for military spouses and service members who are living here in Washington.

(00:04:25):

What we've been working on the last several months is ensuring that we are in compliance with federal law that requires us to recognize any professional licenses issued by a different

jurisdiction for military members and spouses who moved to Washington on military orders. And so we have worked with our legal representation here at DOL and reviewed all relevant laws and court cases that have occurred throughout the country and determined that we want to go through the process of making sure that we have steps in place where a spouse or service member who applies here and they're applying under the service member Civil Relief Act, federal law for licensure in this state, that they can do so without any additional burden by the state for that licensure.

(00:05:20):

So just as an example, if a military member in Florida gets orders to come here to Washington and they have a spouse who is licensed as a real estate agent or a home appraiser or inspector. If they are licensed there and they come here, we have to recognize that that license is valid as long as they meet that limited criteria, that scope of criteria that says that they're here on orders. And so we have now policy in place and procedures in place to verify their eligibility and then to issue them a license to here. The only stipulation that they allow us to put into place is that once we issue that license, they fall under our authority. So they have to do all the continuing education and make sure they follow all of our laws and regulations.

(00:06:12):

So that's up and going now, it's live, and so we've already started to see some spouses who have applied under that law and we've been able to help get them to work very quickly, within days, as opposed to many times in the past it would've taken maybe weeks or months. So it's been a real benefit to the military community and it's something that not only DOL here has to abide by, but all the other licensing agencies such as DOH, L&I, and so forth. But I just wanted to go ahead and give that update. And if you have any questions, I'm here to answer, or otherwise I'll just turn it back over to Sandy.

Jon Ashlock (00:06:55):

Do we have any questions at all for Jason? So Jason, do we-

Jason Lin (00:07:10):

Under this law, almost everything has been either through, right now, cosmetology or real estate. But this is fairly new, so we're still getting out to a lot of the military community about this. It is spreading fast. But I have not, as of today, seen any correspondence from someone coming in as a home inspector.

Jon Ashlock (00:07:36):

How does it, I know you went through this a year ago, how is word getting out to military members?

Jason Lin (00:07:44):

A lot of it is just through our working with the local military community and installations. I work closely with Olivia Burley, who is the spouse employment liaison for the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs. She does a lot of Roundtable discussions with military communities. And I've worked also with, well, I've been to a couple of conferences. One was for over in Spokane, I went to the Air Force Base Fairchild and sat in the summit with a lot of local

representatives, legislators and military representatives to go ahead and provide them the information that we're sharing here now that this is available. And so it's spreading pretty quickly and it's really through word of mouth, and then social media, where Olivia is very active in spreading this information. So it's really just kind of a joint effort.

Jon Ashlock (00:08:53):

What sort of feedback have you received from the people who have transitioned?

Jason Lin (00:08:58):

Very good feedback. We've had a few real estate agents who were very excited about the opportunity to do this and the military leaders because spousal employment's a huge issue among the military community, not just here but across the country, especially within this realm of licensure and professions. So they're very excited about not only what we've done with state law, with expediting licensing applications, but as well as putting into place processes for people to be able to transfer their licenses without any undue burden being put on them. So it's been a very positive feedback both from military leaders as well as the overall community.

Jon Ashlock (00:09:45):

Oh, thank you.

Jordan Howard (00:09:48):

I had a quick question. I know there's a number of states that do not have licensure. I assume that since they do not have a license, there can't be really reciprocity with that, right?

Jason Lin (00:10:03):

Correct. If they are, if they're working without any sort of license or certificate or anything like that, then we wouldn't be able to recognize that the law specifically states that we would have to recognize any actual license within that same scope of work.

Jordan Howard (00:10:24):

So that's any license, even if their initial requirements are less than Washington States. Is that correct?

Jason Lin (00:10:31):

That's correct.

Jordan Howard (00:10:32):

Okay. Thank you.

Jon Ashlock (00:10:37):

Any other questions? Not seeing any hands. Thank you, Jason, for your input.

Jason Lin (00:10:47):

Thank you.

Jon Ashlock (00:10:49):

All right. Moving on to in-person classroom training. Board Member Thompson, at this time discussion on in-person classroom training.

Glen Thompson (00:10:59):

Yeah, this has actually been a subject that has not been able to escape me for some time now, just I guess due to my position in teacher as well. So just to make sure I got this all done, I did do kind of a written statement. I'll kind of read through this and then I'll open the floor up after I get through my statement, if that all sounds good to everybody. So I'll start out, I know the discussion of what a classroom is and what it isn't has been a portion of our board member time and what is best for future home inspectors. It's a topic that won't seem to go away in my world. I have been contacted by some multi-inspector firm owners asking me if there's any chance of getting to in-person learning back and getting away from the online classroom. Their experience has been that the candidates that they're hiring are not as prepared as the previous ones. It's taking them longer to be ready to work on their own out in the field. They're frustrated by this process and they want better candidates to work for their companies.

(00:11:48):

So I have unique view of this as well. Since I've been an instructor since the beginning of 2020, I've been a part of both environments where I've been in the classroom physically and also sitting at my computer talking over a webcam. I've also seen the different results when we go out to do the field training. Classes that work together in all the same room are able to work together and push one another in better ways. The instructor is on site before and after classes and able to go over any additional questions, help with software and just be there. It is also definitely a more hands-on environment with greater interaction amongst everybody.

(00:12:20):

The school that I teach with used to hold their classes at the Renton Technical College. One of the benefits of being there is we actually have hands-on learning with HVAC equipment, water heaters, electric panels, things that the students could actually get in there and touch, see, and use. And then the students were able to then have discussions and be right there in person together. And then also once I got to the field training with me, they were definitely more prepared as we got to those subjects versus the more time I spend now working through those in the field portion.

(00:12:52):

Then the schools came to the point and they realized, "Hey, guess what? It's cheaper to do online training. We don't have to do room rental. We don't have to pay an instructor to stay somewhere for two weeks." So most of the classes have now become all online. And this environment is most of the instructor talking, glazed looks upon the faces of tiny screens of participants. In an average class size of about 20, it's really only three to five people who consist to interact and ask questions. When they hit field training. With me, I've found I've spent more time working on the basics. All classes typically struggle with the electrical, the HVAC department, but I've noticed it had become even greater.

(00:13:28):

As a great example of online versus in person, this past June, as we as a board got to meet in person for the very first time, I walked away from that meeting, I was so excited about being a board member, got to interact with each and every one of you. I also got to find out more about you and your positions in the industry as well as where you are as inspectors in that short two hour period of time leading up to before, during, and after the meeting than I did in almost a year and a half of sitting here at my computer working with each and every one of you.

(00:14:01):

Was it a pain to take two days off to travel for that, travel the two-hour drive from SeaTac down to Olympia? Yeah, it absolutely was. It was not the greatest thing in the world, but you know what? I'm already looking forward to next June when I get to do it again because the interaction with each and every one of you was so valuable, it has actually made me excited to be a portion of, a member of this board yet again.

(00:14:22):

The one common thread I continue to hear online learning as a positive is that it does open up our industry to more people to attend because they can do it from their home. There's no need to travel or find lodging or food. It also has brought down the cost of taking these courses. The example that I know specifically is the course went from \$4,000 to \$3,000 and regardless of other cost of 4,000 or 3,000 or travel may be required, if this is an industry someone who wants to be in, they're going to do whatever it takes to make it happen.

(00:14:54):

That is a common theme I hear amongst my peers who have made this as a career. It is a cheap and short amount of time to get started in a brand new career. Our youth today take on tens of thousands of dollars or more in student loan debt, move for up to four years to get a degree, and they may not even be able to get a job from that point. From start to finish, to become a home inspector, a licensed home inspector in the state of Washington, you can probably get it done in about two months. I would ask, are we trying to add more people to our industry for the sake of adding numbers or do we want to add more people who are poised to succeed, bring quality to our industry?

(00:15:26):

I do know that the success rate of running successful inspection business has been quite low. I stay in contact with a lot of my past students and I know many of them struggle to make it past two years. Many of the ones who are still in business today. Another common theme is they learned in person. We really only have test scores as our metric to look at, which you can see here on our screen. So they've been pretty stable. But I also don't feel like test scores are a defining factor. I mean, I know anybody who can study to pass a test. It is really the interpersonal interaction that takes a good inspector to a great one.

(00:15:57):

So I've reached out to many in our community to either attend this meeting or send a letter in writing to give their opinions to Hopefully we hear from some of those at the end. We will see at the end of this meeting whether what the response was. There may be nothing, just depending on how people are invested in this or not. Maybe they just want to talk to me and complain. I

don't know. But hopefully the board would like to take a moment here, we'll discuss that and see what the rest of your opinions are, and hopefully with enough input here, I would like to think that maybe by the next meeting in December, we might be able to put before the board a vote on the topic. So I turn this floor over to everybody here. I would love to have the discussion and see what everybody's thoughts are.

Jon Ashlock (00:16:39):

Thank you, Board Member Thompson. On that point, I'm torn on it, in general. I totally agree that in classroom training, you're going to get, depending on the class where you're at, better training than virtual. But also to your point, the portion of opening it up to more people I think is also important too. I do see on the reports on where home inspectors are located, we do seem to have a few that are in more remote areas. I believe in the past we had none up north in the Republic area for quite some time, and I believe we have one there now. So that does help out.

(00:17:15):

It's a tough road to travel, in many ways. I don't think there is necessarily a solid answer for which is the best and which is the worst. We've talked about it quite a bit and I think feedback is going to be valuable in determining which way we go, and we just have to look at it logically, I believe. And your statements are very correct in many, many ways. So thank you for bringing this up.

Glen Thompson (00:17:45):

Yeah, you bet. I'd be interested to see if the public who have reached out to me initially are going to be passionate enough to actually submit something to this meeting. So it'll be interesting to find out. I've kind of told people this is the last time I'm bringing this up, so make it happen now or it's not happening at all. I'm tired of this.

Jon Ashlock (00:18:04):

Does anybody on the other, unless the board have any comments?

Jordan Howard (00:18:07):

Yeah, I'm not a certified educator, but I do the in-field training for a couple different schools for the people who have gone through the class and I've noticed the same thing, the ones who are in person typically are more prepared when they come out into the field. I'm not having to do the basics nearly as much, go over the simple stuff nearly as much. There's always some of it, people forget or whatever, but people who have been online definitely, in general, there are exceptions for sure, but in general have been at a lower standard, I would say.

(00:18:52):

And if that's the case, if we're going to continue to allow online, I think there needs to be maybe some more guidelines to that. I don't know what that is. I'm not in the education field as far as that goes, but it's interaction of some sort ongoing because we want qualified people out in the field. And that test helps to do it, but as you mentioned, anybody can study for a test, that doesn't necessarily mean they know when they get out in the field the right way or how to spot these things. They may know the theoretical what is wrong, but being able to see it in the field is what matters for our industry.

Warren Tryon (00:19:38):

Yeah, I'd kind of add on to that. I mean a lot of the online training programs are geared towards passing the exams, right? They're more for the general sense of information as opposed to the practicality. And I'm wondering if there's a way, like you said, to implement some kind of a real world exam where you have to identify specific items with, say, HVAC or mechanicals, or electrical, or some of the items that it seems like are dwindling in the online courses in addition to the state and the national exam, if that's a possibility.

Jon Ashlock (00:20:25):

Another potential I just thought about, instead of just saying all in class and all remote, you could almost do one where it's hybrid, where the first part of training is remote, which has more of the theories and so on and so forth, and the last couple days are where you do the hands-on, where you're looking at the age of act, you're looking at the electrical too. But again, that's dictating what they're doing and I don't know what sort of power we have. So anyways, Sandy, I see your hands up right now.

Sandy Baur (00:20:53):

Yeah, I'm thinking this might be a great topic to assign to the education subcommittee. The education subcommittee could then meet with our education manager and drill down and find out what exactly can or cannot be done along these lines. So that might be an option. And I also see Deb has her hand raised.

Debra Allen-Ba (00:21:19):

Thanks Sandy. Great minds think alike. I think this education subcommittee has been working on the rubric. That is an absolute vehicle for you to put some of these guardrails in place. And maybe it isn't limiting hybrid or the fact that virtual classroom can happen, but maybe putting some guidelines on what does an interactive classroom look like and helping to define that so that as our education manager is reviewing course submissions, he can be looking for some of these things that really what we're hearing is we need students that are engaged and participatory. And that has been a challenge, even when it was in person. We had many complaints about instructors that would put in a VHS tape and let their class sit there and watch it for the amount of hours. That passed, but that is obviously, for this field, not the best form of education.

(00:22:27):

So I think that if we're looking at the rubric, this would be a really great opportunity to say, Hey, what does participation look like? And really start to define that. And that can be participation, whether it's virtually or in person. I don't think we want to put Pandora back in the box because we have opened up this classroom to being virtual, and that's been a vehicle for allowing more working professionals to be able to change directions. If you're not limited to having to break away from your job to start a new career because of the educational components, that's great. That is a huge boundary breaker for some of the barriers to getting into the profession. So I would urge the subcommittee to look at that and see how they can maybe adapt it to the ways that it could be more interactive. Thank you.

Jon Ashlock (00:23:33):

Board Member McFeeley, you have your hand up right now.

Austin McFeeley (00:23:37):

I'm not on the education subcommittee, but something that I was, while Deborah was talking was, we were talking more hands-on stuff and we require this 40 hours in the field training. Is there any leeway or any thoughts of potentially increasing that to have more in-field training? I know when I was training 11 years ago, I got more out of that 40 hours in the field than I did in 120 hours in class, and I was in person. I know that's law and regulations and everything, but that's just something I'd throw out there as potentially more in-field training because that's what we're doing, we're in the field.

Jon Ashlock (00:24:23):

So to that point, I know being on the education Subcommittee, one of the things that we are able to do is change the buckets of training hours, move an hour from here to hour to there, but the total number of hours would actually end up, or adding additional in there would take a active legislator to be able to do that.

(00:24:44):

So I think it kind of comes down to really learning what the nomination or the approval process is for allowing what comes in for training. I don't remember that on the education committee at all, just that the courses come up for vote and that little checklist isn't necessarily part of us. Lisa, I see your hand is raised right now.

Lisa Lotus (00:25:12):

Hello. So are you saying that you would like to find out what is involved with the legislature change? Because I would absolutely a hundred percent support that move to increasing the education in-field, in the field hours. A hundred percent, I would include that or increase it. So I don't know. I also just wanted to say I like the idea about the hybrid class, where students could then learn the theory online because that's just basically busy work sometimes. But I mean, unless you're being imparted important information where you can't see whatever it is, but I feel like I completely missed out because I went to a terrible training program and I would've really liked to have gotten much more hands-on instruction, like the thing with Renton. It's really important and I just hope that that can happen somehow with this group.

Jon Ashlock (00:26:16):

Thanks, Lisa. Deborah, your hand is raised again.

Debra Allen-Ba (00:26:20):

Yeah. I just wanted to answer to Lisa about what it takes to change a statute as opposed to rule, and where the board has a lot more flexibility. This board has the ability to help with the rule writing, which are based on the laws, which are the statutes for your industry. Where it's defined in how many hours of field training and how many hours of education, those were codified in law in the statutes. So to change that means getting a bill sponsor. A lot of times the agency asks for agency requested legislation. With the DOL, we have a very small amount of basically requests that we can do to our legislators. A lot of times within our business and professions

division, we sort of get last in line because our drivers, that section gets a lot more of the political influence, if you will.

(00:27:31):

I have already requested legislative change for this industry based on some struggles we've been having with board members. I know Jon and Jordan, you may remember that part of the struggle that we were having getting board members was that we were only allowed to appoint two board members per year. On a board of seven, that math doesn't work out very well when we have more board members leaving in a given year. So I have already requested that. I requested that legislative change, I think it's been more than three years ago now. It just keeps getting pushed back. It'll be in one of the requests for legislative cleanup.

(00:28:16):

But what this is, this wouldn't be legislative cleanup, this is something where you are doing industry-led. A lot of times with some of our professions, the way to influence that change is through your trade associations. So that would be where I would say you would get better leverage, is that if you worked with one of those organizations as an industry as a whole to find a bill sponsor and to make that statutory change, that's how that would happen. Otherwise, I think the vehicles that we have for making change within this board is in your rubric, which is you have the authority to change your rubric. That is an easy way to lay that out. I know in some respects it's kind of telling you how much you need to have in each of those, and not so much about the what. But that is an area where you could influence it a little bit more. I hope that helps.

Lisa Lotus (00:29:19):

Yes, that does help. Thank you, Deborah, is it? I was just going to say great, because I'm going to my industry's professional association conference in a couple of weeks, so I will start just sort of thinking about this and talking with people there. Thanks.

Sandy Baur (00:29:43):

Chair Ashlock, you're muted.

Jon Ashlock (00:29:46):

Yep, I just realized that. Okay.

Warren Tryon (00:29:47):

I read your lips. Yeah, I mean basically what she's saying, Lisa, is that this board doesn't have much in the form of teeth when it comes to changing what's already in law. We can propose items within our limited scope as far as, which kind of was segue into what my read-out was going to be on our business subcommittee, which is just that we were reviewing the RCW to see if there was any leniency or way we could change the statutory time and term limits of our board because we're always in a deficit, it's hard to bring new inspectors on just within our own profession, and some of the requirements required to become a board member are pretty steep.

(00:30:38):

So that is an in-topic in our subcommittee, it's in discussion, and it sounds like Deborah, you already have been trying to pull those levers for some time. So it might just be a waiting game at this point because we're all in agreeance, we need to change the law so that we can have an act of full board at any given time, either through extending term limits or the time a term limit has, or the amount of board members, just the sheer numbers. So that kind of would wrap up my continuing business practices subcommittee report out. So thanks for the segue, Deborah.

Debra Allen-Ba (00:31:20):

You're welcome. And as I said, I had already put that in with our agency legislative and policy unit to get it in the queue so that we can suggest that, because it was a real pain point about two, three years ago, as we were trying to replace members who had termed off and others that had had to resign early. So yeah, thank you for the work on that.

Jon Ashlock (00:31:49):

Excellent. Any other discussion on this topic? Great-

Sandy Baur (00:31:53):

I did want to point out real quick that the hybrid format already exists for the home inspector course programs. When the schools submit their course for approval, they just have to select that that's what they want to do as a hybrid program and they can do that.

Jon Ashlock (00:32:12):

So it's up to the school at that point in time.

Sandy Baur (00:32:14):

Correct.

Jon Ashlock (00:32:15):

Yeah. All right, Glen, your hand is up.

Glen Thompson (00:32:20):

Yeah, just a quick view on the hybrid. I've actually done the hybrid teaching. I've done it in both. Just example, usually the courses starts out, we teach the Washington State Standards of practice. Of course, I don't know if you remember how kind of dry and boring that stuff is. The first time I taught it, I was actually in the classroom environment. It went pretty good. The next time I had to do it, I think it was the place that we were renting for whatever reason, wasn't open on the weekend, so I had to sit in a hotel room with another instructor and we did it via of our computers. That two days of standards of practice was the most miserable time I've ever had. It was like pulling teeth, getting through it. So it can be done, but it's still not the greatest thing in the world, unfortunately.

Jon Ashlock (00:33:05):

Thank you. All right, no other comments. We'll go ahead and move on. See anybody else with their hand raised, so on to new business, ancillary businesses. Board Member McFeeley, you have a comment for the clarification of standards of practice terminology. I'll turn the floor over to you.

Austin McFeeley (00:33:25):

Yes, thank you. So I've been in discussions with a number of inspectors, both in and out of state about this type of topic. And I'm going to read the relevant topic out of the WAC. It's not for one year after completion of the inspection, repair, replace or upgrade for compensation components or systems of any building inspected. This section applies to the inspector's firm and other employees or principals of that firm or affiliated firms. So I had a question on this, I called the Washington State Legal, I don't remember exactly, but I talked to somebody with Washington State, and they clarified that this means you cannot work on, touch the house in any way, shape, or form for 12 months, which I get. The purpose of this is to protect the consumers from unethical inspectors saying there's all these issues and I'll fix them for the low price of X, Y and Z.

(00:34:26):

The reason I bring this up is services rendered that are not covered under the SOP. Some examples would include pest control, mold abatement, radon mitigation, and mobile home, like securing mobile homes for certification. I'm sure there's others, those are the ones that I've had discussions with people about that fall outside of the home Inspector SOP, and in other municipalities, locations, states, there are business owners that run both a home inspection and a mold mitigation, or a radon mitigation company.

(00:35:14):

Under our current statute, we would not be allowed to do that. And if that's the way we want it to stay, that's fine, but I know there are entrepreneurs out there that may want to have affiliated services that would potentially be something that they could benefit from. That is outside of the home inspection SOP. But currently under the current reading of the law, that would not be allowed. So I just wanted to bring it up, see if that's something we wanted to pursue as a potential effort to try to either clarify or reword that line of the WAC. That's all I've got, so I'm opening it up to comments.

Jon Ashlock (00:36:03):

Board Member Thompson, you have your hand raised.

Glen Thompson (00:36:06):

Yeah, this is actually a great topic. I have a contractor's license as well as my inspector license, and I generally use it for real estate agents when they hand me a list of things that need to be repaired by another inspector. I have that in place just as kind of additional service. But occasionally I'll be out doing an inspection and when the agent will say to my buyer, "Hey, do you know he's also a contractor?" And I kind got to throw the flag, throw a timeout and say, "Well, I can't actually touch your house for one year after I do the inspection." And they're like, "Well, even if I just want you to have out hang some shelves or something?" Like, "Yeah, I'm sorry. It's just kind of the way it's written."

(00:36:40):

So that would actually be something really worth looking into. I understand why it's in place to conflict of interest, but yeah, I could see if we could define that up a little bit better. Then I could

have some of these people who are like, if they want me to come out and hang some shelves or something, that would be more acceptable. That's just my thought.

Jon Ashlock (00:37:02):

Thank you. Board Member Barbour.

Brad Barbour (00:37:05):

I guess the other thing would be it's touching the house with compensation. I guess the scenario I'm thinking of is, so I mean I've heard of people having issues with an inspection they did or they damaged something or missed something, they would go out and fix it themselves for the client without additional compensation. So I don't know if that SOP is that clear, because it sounds like you talked to the entity that said, "You're not allowed to touch the house for 12 months," well, I think would be if you're not allowed to touch the house for compensation for 12 months. Is that right?

Austin McFeeley (00:37:44):

That is correct. That's how it's written right now. It's, for anybody who cares, it's WAC 308-408C-020 item eight, the home inspector must not for one year after completion for compensation.

Brad Barbour (00:38:02):

Maybe it should be for additional compensation, because you've been compensated for the home inspection itself. You guys following what I'm saying?

Austin McFeeley (00:38:19):

Yeah.

Brad Barbour (00:38:20):

Yeah, I mean I know it's kind of a rabbit hole, I don't think anybody would get in trouble for that, but maybe a case could be made. Especially if you talked to that entity that said you're not allowed to touch the house for 12 months, is what it means.

Jon Ashlock (00:38:35):

Yeah, the word compensation is definitely a big one. I mean, my background, I have specializations on historic structures and one of the most common things, which most of us see are single-hung windows that are painted shut and there's some tricks to be able to free them, and a lot of contractors don't know the tricks to be able to free the windows, and I have shown people how to do that without compensation so that they could do it themselves. Now is that violating or not? I wasn't compensated, but I did inspect the house.

(00:39:06):

If we were to go down and say, "This is okay, this is okay, this is not okay," we might almost be too granular. It's going to be an administrative nightmare for what you can and can't do on the house. It could be as simple as you're allowed to do anything on the house that wasn't called out during the home inspection, but then potentially there may be home inspectors that decide not to call things out so they could get the jobs too. So it's a can of worms, the way I look at it, unfortunately.

Austin McFeeley (00:39:39):

I see what you're saying. Oh, sorry. I see what you're saying, as far as what's in the inspection. My feeling on everything would be more of what's covered by the SOP is, since mold is not covered by the SOP, it's specifically excluded. Asbestos abatement, it's specifically excluded. Those type of things, if the inspector also had another business that did that and had the appropriate certifications and licenses to do those type of things, would that be something that we would want to consider allowing them to have an affiliated business that did that? Because I mean, the Washington State SOP is very particular on what we are and are not supposed to be looking at. And while Board Member Barbour's thing is about compensation and fixing those things, and I think that's a valid conversation as well, that wasn't my initial point of this one. It'd be more on the things outside of the SOP.

(00:40:51):

Say you have that contractor's license and that client wants to upgrade their kitchen. You can't do that upgrade to that kitchen even though it's nothing wrong with what you've called out in that inspection. They want to put in new cabinets in a new countertop, you can't do that for 12 months because you inspected that house. And that seems almost penalizing us for having two businesses in that regards. So those are the type of things that I think personally, and I may be in the minority, I don't know, that's perfectly fine, should be allowed outside. Something that is outside the SOP from what have to be looking at in the inspections.

Jon Ashlock (00:41:44):

Board Member Tryon.

Warren Tryon (00:41:47):

I understand where Austin's coming from, however, I think generally speaking, it's a good rule. And because even though mold, asbestos, environmental are outside the scope, we're still documenting these items in our reports that may be or could be stains, which may be, or this material could be. So the identification still a part of your home inspection report. And so I think just good rule of thumb, and maybe you exclude it, I think it keeps an affairs element out of our industry where you might have a pocket of inspectors that identify issues that may or may not be an issue at all just to obtain work, which is essentially like insider trading, if you look at it from a sense of I'm hired to come inspect this house and yet I'm the first one that's going to be bidding on the work that I'm finding, right? It would-

(00:42:39):

... All encompassing saying, "Hey, if you've done a home inspection on this, regardless of what the SOP standards are, don't touch it for a year." Which means that anything that remod wise, as far as you're talking about, Austin, maybe they want to upgrade their kitchen cabinetry and countertops. If they can wait a year to do that, then I don't see an issue with it. But it's the pertinent during the transaction process that they're trying to eliminate unscrupulous inspectors from basically creating their own work.

Austin McFeeley (00:43:19):

Yeah. I get the purpose of it, and I don't disagree with that, and I just wanted to bring up the conversation because there's certain things that it's, if we need to keep it that way to make sure

that there is no conflict, then that's the way it is. And I just thought, based on, I've had conversations in state and out of state with inspectors that have had these questions. I've considered one or two of the ancillary, not ... affiliated businesses, but it's restricting on that, which is fine. And I definitely understand that side of it, for sure.

Jon Ashlock (00:44:05):

Thank you. Good conversation. Anybody else have any other thoughts?

Warren Tryon (00:44:08):

There's nothing in the law that says your wife can't own a business though.

Austin McFeeley (00:44:13):

It's an affiliated business. That's the thing, right? And if anybody works in both, I don't think you'd win that lawsuit with the way it's currently written. Yeah.

Jon Ashlock (00:44:34):

To make sure I'm safe, even in my own business, I don't even refer out companies that I know, that I've worked with. I always tell a person to do their own research, check the BBB, check online review and other people, but I personally don't even want that conflict of interest in saying, "Company X is really great at doing this." I don't want to open that can of worms for myself. [inaudible 00:44:57]

Warren Tryon (00:44:56):

You could also go the ground of, "Here's three, take your pick." Just like real estate agents can't specifically refer a particular home inspector, they can give you their top three though, or four maybe it is now.

Jon Ashlock (00:45:15):

Yeah, I've had quite a few people also ask if I could work on the house and my best comment always come right up to is my-

(00:45:20):

All right, any other comments, concerns on this topic? All right, let's go ahead and move on then to reports. Subcommittee reports. Board Member [inaudible 00:45:40], changing business practices.

Warren Tryon (00:45:46):

I'll take this one, Jon. This is just kind of to reiterate what we were talking about earlier with Deborah and the board composition. We've been reviewing changing the law so that we are not in a deficit at any given time and especially since our industry is more difficult to enter into for licensure, our pool of potential candidates is quite smaller, just on a sheer numbers level statewide. So in order to continue this advisory committee to have any kind of effect on the industry, we need to have full staffed board at all given points in time, and so in order to do that, we need to change the statutory law. That's kind of the basis of what we've been discussing.

Jon Ashlock (00:46:40):

Yeah, we had a good conversation on it a little while ago, so I kind of jumped ahead, which was great though. But thank you. All right, moving on. Diversity, equity, inclusion. Vice Chair Howard.

Jordan Howard (00:46:54):

Hello everybody. So we now have a full subcommittee, with Lisa joining Mr. McFeeley and myself. One of the things that we were trying to brainstorm was how to increase the awareness of the industry. Community colleges and technical colleges kind of came to the forefront as they have quarterly enrollments and a number of career fairs and work source things.

(00:47:16):

One thing that we'd like to potentially start doing is coming up with things that we can task work source to include in some of their career fairs, increasing an introduction to the home inspection profession. There's a lot of time jukos and technical colleges, there's quite a range of people age-wise, career-wise, pivoting across the board. Increasing the kind of outreach of that also as those introductory colleges and technicals are more diverse than say your universities. Also, looking at potential ways that work source funding options may be grant-wise and applications, but all kind of in the process there.

(00:48:00):

The second thing that we've started to do is look at a couple of the WACs. 308-408A 2020 and 30 specifically. And a couple of the things that have come up there are kind of focusing on some of the potential fees. Things like rescheduling policies and penalties that might be disproportionate or may disproportionately affect someone who isn't able to have child care or access as easily as other members. Kind of touching onto some of the what the licensing exemptions from other jurisdictions back to the introductory. So looking at that repossity anyway, scheduling the exam training course requirements, and this kind of goes back to our other conversation that we had while in the in-class is great, kind of the Pandora's box of that online training is necessary to serve some of these communities where you do not have access to training facilities as well as transportation and just the ability to take time off of what might be someone's primary job to attend those.

(00:49:16):

So a lot of discussions and basically moving forward we're going to be trying to come up with something that we can blast out to community and state colleges or technical colleges to increase the awareness during those usually three to four quarters of in-person learning across campuses and then going further from there.

Lisa Lotus (00:49:45):

Chair Ashlock, you're muted.

Jon Ashlock (00:49:49):

Thought I clicked it but I did not click it. Moving on to the education subcommittee, Board Member Thompson.

Glen Thompson (00:49:57):

All right, so the last board meeting, we were talking about that rubric and making some changes to the different hours as far as electrical HVAC, for example. We did have on, let's see here ... My page jumped. There it is. July 12th, we had a listening session open to the public and unfortunately we did not have any attendees to that, so we did not get any public input on what the potential change to the hours could be. So basically what they are is what we discussed at the last quarterly meeting in June. We really haven't touched on too much since then, we actually weren't able to meet for the last month's meeting. And then there has been some discussion. Sounds like similar with the DEI committee about getting the word out there. How do we get more interest into our industry, drawing in new people, that type of deal. So that's where we're at.

Jon Ashlock (00:50:48):

Thank you. All right, moving on. Let's see, Central Investigations. Nathan Buck, are you in line right now?

Nathan Buck (00:50:56):

Yes, I am. Thank you very much. So again, my name is Nathan Buck. I'm the investigation supervisor for real estate programs to include home inspectors. To go over the numbers that we have here, this is from January 1st of '24 to, it goes to August 6th, of 2024. The total number of complaints that we have received were 14. We have 15 in investigation, one in legal, 12 that we had closed, and we had that grand total of a 28 for that timeframe. With the next slide will be the trends.

(00:51:36):

So the most common complaint type is pretty much the same that has been in some of the other report outs. Inspectors not conducting inspections of required areas is the most common complaint. What we have found during the course of the investigation, the current common findings are failure to inspect and report on all requirements per the WAC, failure to have both the client and inspector sign the inspection agreement, and failure to provide a report to the DOL during an investigation. That means the inspection agreement or the inspection report itself. Do we have any questions for the investigation portion of this? So with that, and I'm not sure if Sandy's going to do it or if I-

Sandy Baur (00:52:24):

Yep.

Nathan Buck (00:52:25):

Okay, perfect. Thank you very much.

Sandy Baur (00:52:27):

Yep. Yeah, so I'm stepping in for our regulatory complaint unit today to report on the most common remedies and sanctions based on the investigations. The most common are license denial, license revocation, or suspension and fines. Now I wanted to point out that, within the last 10 years, there have only been six cases that have been referred to the regulatory compliance unit for action. Most everything else has been figured out and finalized, and everything at the-

(00:53:14):

The home inspector industry is doing a great job of self-regulating themselves with only six cases that have gone in the last 10 years. And with that, are there any questions? All right, thank you.

Jon Ashlock (00:53:32):

All right, moving over to Licensee Count records. Tanya Hessler.

Tanya Hessler (00:53:40):

Good morning. I'm Tanya Hessler. I'm the program manager over home inspectors. Today we have our licensee counts from under 25 to 65 and above, so currently we have 1,141 active home inspectors. You have the next slide, Sandy? And this breaks down the 1,141, how they're broken out for the counties that they're located in. As of August of '24, we have processed 61 new applications and 226 renewals for home inspectors. And for the licensee information. Does anybody have any questions? Thank you.

Jon Ashlock (00:54:36):

Excellent. Moving on to Board's Commission outreach, the housing market.

Sandy Baur (00:54:41):

Yeah, so this is me again. I just want to do a quick highlight of the housing market report. It has been included in its entirety in your packet, so feel free to read through that. Also, the link to download all of these accompanying reports have been included in your packet as well. So I just wanted to touch that the existing home sales rose the second quarter by 0.8% compared to first quarter, but overall they're down about 16% compared to this time last year. Building permit activity also fell about 13% from last year.

(00:55:24):

The median price for a home in Washington for the second quarter was about \$695,000, which is about 6% higher than it was this time last year. The housing Affordability Index fell for both median income and first time buyers from the previous quarter. The Median Income Buyer housing Affordability Index has stayed above 100 in only three counties. So that means there's 36 counties where the Home Affordability Index fell. For permits issued, there were a total of 8,656 residential building permits issued during this quarter, and out of those there were 4,941 that were single family residents.

(00:56:22):

And currently, for the second quarter, there's a two-point-two-month supply of housing on the market. The goal is three, is a three-month supply. That increase compared to the first quarter, we only had a two-month supply, so things are going up a little bit. This time last year, we had a one-point-eight-month supply. So things look like they're leveling out and the housing market will be getting a little bit better. Maybe. We all know how that housing market can be crazy. And also for the second quarter there were 15,326 homes available for sale on the market. And those are the basic highlights of the housing market report. Are there any questions?

Jon Ashlock (00:57:14):

I'll be curious to see what the Fed interest rate cut yesterday is going to make on this by next quarter.

Sandy Baur (00:57:21):

It will be interesting indeed. So I would encourage everyone to click that link on your packet and keep an eye out for that third quarter housing market report, and dig in and do some research on that. It's going to be very exciting indeed.

Jon Ashlock (00:57:39):

All right. [Inaudible 00:57:40], the master action list. Floor is yours.

Sandra Schaefer (00:57:48):

Thank you. And we just have one item, and it is ... gosh, I'm clicking on the wrong thing here. It is a recruitment. There are two board members whose terms expire in December of this year, and so we don't currently have any empty seats, but we're trying to get ahead of the game just so we don't, as we talked about a couple times, don't end up not having enough people. So we did send out a Listserv announcement earlier this month and we will do our best to get those two seats either filled or continued. I think we've already had this discussion several times, but if you are currently an incumbent, you can request to stay in the position depending on how many terms you've served in the past. So that in mind.

Jon Ashlock (00:58:46):

Thank you. All right, I'm going to go ahead and move on to open the floor to the public comments. Sorry. I'll now open the floor to the public to address the board and share their thoughts, concerns, and requests. Written comments can be submitted at least two days prior to the meeting by emailing dealboards.dol.wa.gov. Members of the public, while you're addressing the board, please remember each member of the public is limited to one three minute comment. Comments submitted in writing count as your three minutes. Comments must be on matters within the board's jurisdiction. Board members are limited to directing staff to study the matter for further or requesting the matter be scheduled for later discussion. Ms. Baur, do we have any comments that were submitted in writing?

Sandy Baur (00:59:32):

Yes, we do. We have one written comment which I will read at this time. Dear members of the board, I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to share my insights and experiences regarding the importance of in-person home inspection classes, drawing from my professional background and recent hiring endeavors. Over the past seven years, I have participated in various home inspection classes, both online and in-person. With a substantial background in the field, I found online classes to be sufficient for my personal needs. However, they have never matched the quality and effectiveness of in-person instruction. The depth of understanding and hands-on experience provided by an in-person class is unparalleled.

(01:00:22):

Since 2021, I have hired three inspectors to join my team. Unfortunately, only one has successfully continued into his third year. The others, despite their initial enthusiasm, were overwhelmed and ultimately left the profession due to insufficient preparation. This highlights a

critical issue; online classes are not adequately equipping individuals without a construction background or with minimal experience. The expectation that these courses will produce ready-to-deploy inspectors is unrealistic and sets them up for failure. I have also observed this trend firsthand. During my last inspection class in Washington, only two individuals, including myself, are currently working as inspectors. It is worth noting that I was already in the business at the time of the class. This starkly contrasts the promise of immediate field readiness, often marketed by online courses.

(01:01:27):

Given these observations, I strongly advocate for a shift towards more in-person training opportunities. In-person schooling provides the essential hands-on experience and real-time feedback that are crucial for developing competent and confident inspectors. By making this change, we can prepare new inspectors and ensure a higher success rate in the field. Thank you for considering my perspective. I believe that by prioritizing in-person instruction, we can significantly improve the quality of training and the success rate of new inspectors entering the profession. Sincerely, Joseph Johnson, Owner Inspector Uptown Home Inspections. And that concludes the written comments.

Jon Ashlock (01:02:17):

Thank you. Looks like we have one member of the public with their hand raised right now. Turning the floor over to you, Don Hester.

Don Hester (01:02:26):

Hello everybody. I'm Don Hester with NCW Home Inspection [inaudible 01:02:30] Washington, and a former board member, and a current instructor with the Bellingham Technical College for Fundamentals of Home Inspection. And I have gone through both the pandemic online version of teaching and in-class teaching, and I just don't think there is an equal basis for having just online. Having students in class, where they get hands on and the interaction, and it's been kind of noted by some of these people, it's not just teaching what's wrong and scientific, it's also teaching what's correct and how things are approached. As we all know, as inspectors, there's so many variables out there in the real world, and trying to get somebody to understand what they're looking at and how to make a good observation on what's correct and what's not correct, and what's good practice, what's not good practice, is almost impossible without a hands-on learning experience, let alone having people around you asking questions and engaging, there's a vast difference between online and in-class. So I would highly recommend not moving away from in-class instruction. I think it would be detrimental to the industry. And I'm done.

Jon Ashlock (01:03:57):

Thank you. Good to see you again too, by the way. All right, do we have any people who have just called in that have their hands raised or would like to speak? Does not sound like it, so we'll go ahead and move on then. Conclusion of the meeting. Announcements. Staff board members, do we have any announcements to share at this point in time?

Sandy Baur (01:04:25):

The staff does not have any announcements to share at this time.

Jon Ashlock (01:04:29):

Thank you. Any board members? Don't see any hands raised, we'll move on. All right, a request for future agenda items. Do we have anything for any future meetings that we would like to bring up and request? All right. And let's see here, finally the review of the master action plan. Sandra, do we have anything we need to be adding to the master action list?

Sandra Schaefer (01:05:05):

Yeah, so I don't have any new action items that I heard during the meeting. I did make a note that the in-person classroom training would be included in the education subcommittee report out. So it won't specifically be on the agenda, but that discussion will be during the next meeting. Did I miss anything? Anything important?

Jon Ashlock (01:05:28):

I believe that was it. All right.

Sandra Schaefer (01:05:36):

It sounds about right.

Jon Ashlock (01:05:36):

All right. Well, we are at adjournment now. So it is now 11:05 AM. on September 19th, 2024 and this meeting is adjourned. Our next meeting will be via Teams on December 12th, 2024 at 10:00 AM. Thank you all for attending and have a great day.

Debra Allen-Ba (01:05:58):

Thank you everyone. Good to see you, Don.

Don Hester (01:06:02):

Good to see y'all. Good luck with everything.

Sandy Baur (01:06:06):

Thank you, everyone. Have a wonderful rest of your day.

Debra Allen-Ba (01:06:10):

Bye.