**STATE BOARD OF PLUMBING**

**BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES**

**Date:** April 17, 2025

**Time:**  10:30 a.m.

**Location:** 100 S. Charles Street, Tower 1

 Second Floor, Cherry Hill Conference Room

Baltimore, MD 21201

Held via Video Conference

meet.google.com/qks-niad-yfo

By Phone via Teleconference

1-414-909-7588 (PIN: 385820141)

**Members Present:** Joseph Radtka, Chairman

 Hayward Hinkhaus, Vice Chairman, Industry Member

 Leif Hancock, Industry Member

 Craig Stokes, Industry Member

Robert Parker, Consumer Member

**Absent:** Gregory Schott, Industry Member

Keith Horton, Industry Member

 Richard Bowers, Consumer Member

**LABOR Officials & Staff Present:**

John Dove, Commissioner, Occupational and Professional Licensing

Sarah McDermott, Assistant Commissioner, Occupational and Professional

Licensing

Charles Marquette, Executive Director, Mechanical Licensing

Sloane Fried Kinstler, Assistant Attorney General

 Alicia Dennis, Office of Workforce Development

LaKissha Thornton, Administrative Officer III

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Wayne Fishpaw, Pipe Trades Technologies

Kathy Stradley, MPHCC

Jonathan Sargenant, Omega Plex

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Radtka called the April 17, 2025, Business Meeting of the Maryland State Board of Plumbing to order, virtually, at 10:34 a.m.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

A motion to approve the agenda of the April 17, 2025 Board meeting was made by Mr. Stokes, seconded by Mr. Parker, and unanimously approved by the Board.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion to adopt the March 20, 2025 Business Meeting minutes was made by Mr. Hinkhaus, seconded by Mr. Stokes, and unanimously approved by the Board.

**PLUMBING COMPLAINT COMMITTEE**

Mr. Hinkhaus reported the following findings of the Complaint Committee:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Closed Complaint** | **Under Investigation** | **Sent for A.G. Pre-Charge** | **Criminally Charged** |
|  | 24-0040 | 24-0061 |  |
|  | 24-0041 |  |  |
|  | 24-0062 |  |  |

A motion to accept the findings of the Complaint Committee was made by Mr. Parker, seconded by Mr. Hancock, and unanimously approved by the Board.

**REVIEW OF EXAMINATION STATISTICS AND LICENSE TOTALS**

PSI Exams submitted the following statistical summaries for March 2025:

 **Candidates Passed Failed Pass %**

 **Tested**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Journey Natural Gas Fitter | 4 | 4 | 0 | 100% |
| Journey Plumber/Gas Fitter | 39 | 15 | 24 | 38% |
| Master Natural Gas Fitter | 8 | 4 | 4 | 50% |
| Master Plumber/Gas Fitter | 48 | 23 | 25 | 48% |
|  **TOTAL** | 99 | 46 | 53 | 46% |

Ms. Thornton further reported that since January 2025, 236 candidates were tested, 85 candidates passed, 151 failed, for a pass rate of 36%. Since the inception of the test, 12,174 candidates were tested, 4,413 candidates passed, 7,761 failed, for a pass rate of 36%.There are currently 13,672 active licensees.

**APPLICATION REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT**

Ms. Thornton reported that one (1) application for a reciprocal Master Plumber/Gas Fitter license was reviewed by the committee. The application was denied as it was found that the applicant was not eligible for reciprocity. Before Ms. Thornton’s report, Chairman Radtka confirmed that the Application Review Committee is currently comprised of Chairman Radtka, Mr. Schott, and Mr. Hancock.

A motion to accept the findings of the Application Review Committee was made by Mr. Stokes, seconded by Mr. Parker and unanimously approved by the Board.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence to be discussed.

Alicia Dennis joined the meeting at 10:40 am.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Discussion of Senate Bill 175/ House Bill 222 – Fuel Gas Piping and CSST

Chairman Radtka asked whether there was any new information regarding SB 175 or HB 222. Director Marquette informed the Board that the bill had been passed and was awaiting the Governor’s signature. He stated that, to his knowledge, the language that the Board had requested to be removed from the bill had been stricken from the bill. Director Marquette continued, stating that the bill also required a study to be conducted by the Dept. of Labor and the Office of the Fire Marshall in which recommendations were to be made related to preventing the fire hazards associated with commonly used fuel gas piping systems, including gas piping and corrugated stainless steel tubing, in residential and commercial buildings. Commissioner Dove confirmed for the Board that the Department of Labor would be represented by the Division of Labor and Industry with respect to the study. Chairman Radtka thanked both Commissioner Dove and Director Marquette for the update.

Plumbing Code Update

Director Marquette reported that the language for the code update was still awaiting approval from the Secretary’s Office. He stated once he had obtained approval from the Secretary’s office, he would begin the incorporation by reference (“IBR”) process. Counsel reminded the Board that proposed action on the update could not be submitted until the IBR process had been completed.

2025 MPMIA Training Attendance Review

Chairman Radtka reminded the Board that, at the March meeting, the Board voted to grant eight (8) hours of continuing education credit to the course for inspectors given by the Maryland Plumbers and Mechanical Inspectors Association. Counsel confirmed that no further action was required by the Board at this time.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Discussion on Backflow Compliance Notification

Chairman Radtka reminded the Board of their request for staff to draft a letter informing all backflow/cross connection instructors to provide proof that they are in compliance with the backflow/cross connection training and recertification requirements set forth in COMAR 09.20.04.02. Director Marquette informed the Board that a letter had been drafted and sent to all the approved backflow/cross connection course instructors. He stated that the letter would require that they provide, within 30 days, proof that they still meet the requirements to be an approved backflow instructor. Ms. Thornton confirmed that the letters were mailed and emailed on April 4, 2025 and that the deadline to reply is May 4, 2025. Director Marquette stated that an update would be provided for the Board at the May meeting under Old Business.

PEX\_AL-PEX Gas Pipe System

Chairman Radtka reminded that Board that they had been sent information on the Jones Stephens PEX\_AL-PEX Gas Pipe Fitting System. He stated that he was raising the matter because he had been informed that the manufacturer of PEX-AL-PEX had stated that the piping could be used indoors, which Chairman Radtka believed is incorrect. He pointed out that the Board voted previously in March 2021 to not allow the use of PEX-AL-PEX piping indoors and that it could only be used underground according to IFGC 501.2 and 404.17.

Senate Bill 96- Water Bottle Filling Stations

Chairman Radtka began a discussion on Senate Bill 96, stating that the bill would require that all drinking fountains in new construction contain water bottle filling stations. He stated that the Board had expressed support for the bill in the past and its attempts to reduce plastic pollution.

June Board Meeting Date

Director Marquette noted that the June meeting of the State Board of Plumbing was currently scheduled for June 19, 2025, which is a State Holiday (Juneteenth), and asked whether the Board would like to cancel or reschedule the meeting.

A motion to change the date of the June meeting of the State Board of Plumbing from June 19, 2025 to June 12, 2025, was made by Mr. Stokes, seconded by Mr. Hancock and unanimously approved by the Board. Counsel requested that staff note the change on the website to provide public notice. Chairman Radtka agreed and asked that the item be placed on the May meeting agenda under Old Business.

Chairman Radtka stated that he had received several questions about whether a person who was not licensed as an Apprentice or Journeyman Plumber/Gas Fitter could take a backflow instruction course. He noted that a person who is unlicensed may take the course but could not perform installations or conduct backflow testing unless they were currently licensed as a Journeyman or Master Plumber/Gas Fitter. Chairman Radtka cited COMAR 09.20.04.02 F, which states:

Completion of an approved cross connection/backflow prevention certification program does not authorize an individual to:

(1) Install, test, or certify a mechanical cross connection/backflow prevention device unless the individual is licensed by the Board as a master or journey plumber in accordance with Business Occupations and Professions Article, §12-101(g) or (l), Annotated Code of Maryland; or

(2) Assist in installing, testing, or certifying a mechanical cross connection/backflow prevention device unless the individual is licensed by the Board as an apprentice plumber in accordance with Business Occupations and Professions Article, §12-101(c), Annotated Code of Maryland.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Director Marquette reported that all the examinations for the Mechanical Licensing Units administered by PSI were available in Spanish as of April 9, 2025. Director Marquette followed up on the discussion of a proposed reciprocity agreement for Master and Journeyman Plumber/Gas Fitters with the District of Columbia (“DC”), stating that a draft was being prepared. He noted that the agreement would require anyone seeking reciprocity from DC to Maryland would have to have a current backflow certification. Director Marquette requested that any questions or concerns be sent to him so they could be considered while the agreement is being drafted. He stated that he would share the final draft with the Board for approval after it had been completed.

**COUNSEL’S REPORT**

Counsel did not offer a report.

**CHAIR’S REPORT**

Chairman Radtka thanked the Board for their participation in the meeting and wished everyone a Happy Holiday weekend and reported that the IPC is available in Spanish.

**CLOSED SESSION**

The Board did not convene in a Closed Session.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Upon Mr. Stokes’ Motion, and Mr. Hinkhaus’ second, and the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:08 am.

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Charles Marquette Date**

**Executive Director**

**Signed on behalf of the Board as voted and approved on: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**