



ASHTABULA COUNTY BUILDERS ASSOCIATION

" The Voice of the Industry in Ashtabula County"

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTARY

WELCOME NEW MEMBER

TODD NAGY AIA

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

October 8th	Building and Health Department Elks Club
November 12th	Annual Meeting Halo Elks Club
January 14th	General Meeting Elks Club
February 11th	General Meeting Elks
March 11th	General Meeting Elks
April 8th	General Meeting Elks
May 13th	General Meeting Elks
June 10th	Steak Fry Elks

Happy hour is 6:00pm - 7:00pm

Dinner 7:00pm

RSVP by Monday prior to meeting date and
if you need to cancel please call by Tuesday evening.

Hello everyone! Many thanks to Drew Thomas and his crew for another fantastic buffet at our Annual Clam Bake. The food was excellent as always. Well, it looks as if summer is at a close and fall is beginning with the vibrant colors starting to come out in the trees. I hope business is starting to pick up for our members in this fall season. Our October meeting is fastly approaching we will be having the heads of the building department, the health department, and the plumbing department to speak with us about what has been going on with code issues and building activity so far this year. They will also be informing us about any upcoming changes in code issues and their take on building activity for the coming year. I look forward to seeing all our members there. Looking forward to next months meeting, I would like to remind everyone that November is our annual meeting and that all members should attend. You will be given an overview of how our association is doing as well as taking care of any business or issues that need to be addressed. Our newer board members also have some new ideas that they would like to share with you for some of next years meetings. As always your association is here to assist you in anyway possible.

Thanks,
Rick

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OCTOBER 8, 2009

MONTHLY MEETING

at

ELKS Club

SPEAKERS:

BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Dave Smith, Chief Building Official

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Ray Saporito, Health Commissioner

Bob Wollschlerger, Chief Plumbing Inspector

6:00 - 7:00 Open Bar

7:00 Dinner

Presentation to follow Dinner

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

2009

Officers

Rick Miller, President

Joe Oros, Vice-President

Bill Romanko, Secretary

Rich Vanek, Treasurer

Frank Curtin, Immediate Past President

Trustees

Calvin Brown, Jr.

Bill Claycomb

Doug Spencer

Dan Theiss

Tim Vogel

Director

Michelle Laveck

ANNUAL MEETING

November 12, 2009

As it is the Annual Meeting your presence and opinion is necessary. Your VOTE Counts!

AGENDA

Recognition of Board of Trustees 2009

Election of Officers Board of Trustees 2010

Meetings

- *Suggestion of Speakers

Building Department Issues

- * Reduction of work hours
- * Reduction of staff

Fundraisers:

- * Casino Night
- * Reverse Raffle
- * Old Fashion Golf Outing

Growth Partnership

- * New Assessment

Please call the office 997-1866 or e-mail ashtabulacountybuilders@windstream.net if you would like anything added to the agenda.

September 8, 2009

Ashtabula County Commissioners: Ms. Carlo, Mr. Claypool, and Mr. Moroski
25 West Jefferson Street
Jefferson, OH 44047

RE: Response to the Latest Changes in the Department of Building Regulations

Back in March of 2005, we were asked to provide input into the restructuring of the Department of Building Regulations (from hence forth know as the Building Department) fee schedules and refundable deposit structure.

The directive from you, the Commissioners, to David Smith in 2005 was to make the Building Department self supporting. We, at the Builders Association, all agreed that the increase in residential building fees and registration fees was understandable. After reviewing Mr. Smith's changes we feel that they were fair and workable. We would however like to see the fee schedule reviewed more often and in our previous letter to you we thought that 3-4 years would be more prudent and that time has come.

The next major change that Mr. Smith had proposed was to eliminate the refundable deposit for residential permits. This proposed change was met with great opposition. We still feel as we did in 2005 that the refundable deposit may provide the additional incentive for final inspections to occur. We also feel that any forfeited deposits should be used within the Building Department to offset costs within this department.

It has come to our attention that the forfeited deposits from over the years and the building fees collected have been used to offset the short comings of other county agencies and departments. This action we are not in favor of. We feel that this money should remain within the Building Department to support its activities (staffing, equipment, cars, etc.). It has also come to our attention that the Building Department has had to reduce its staff and shorten their hours of operation which we feel will greatly impact the builders in the county. We feel that your actions at this time are not wise and that the Building Department should remain strong so that they can support the builders as we are accustomed to. We feel that the economy will improve and our building activities will increase, causing tax revenues to increase, if the Building Department is not ready for this rebound it will be a hindrance to all builders within the county.

Sincerely,

The Ashtabula County Builders Association

Rick Miller, President
U. I. C. Construction

Joe Oros, Vice President
Oros Builders

Bill Romanko, Secretary
A. Louis Supply Company

Dan Theiss, Chairman of the Code Committee
D. S. Theiss Building Contractors

Cc: David Smith and the Members of the Ashtabula Builders Association

Lenders Hold the Keys to Housing Recovery

Christian Redfearn, an associate professor of policy and development at the University of Southern California and a faculty member at the Lusk Center for Real Estate, says that a healthy banking sector and a couple more months with no more price declines are needed to spur housing sales and home building. "Right now, banks are looking around and seeing too many vacancies, too much uncertainty about price levels. They are in no position to lend....Until lending returns to rational levels, we won't have a robust housing market recovery." Redfearn also notes a sharp distinction between activity at the low end of the market, where financing is available, and at the high end, where it is more difficult. "I'd argue that the pricing models used by banks to value higher-end homes are based on aggregate indexes that are comprised heavily of low-end homes." Banks using these aggregates, he says, "may undervalue homes and provide too little credit for buyers to reach prices at which owners are willing to sell." Redfearn says he has seen several friends get back into the market, "realizing what gains they could in their current homes and moving up in the market. These are households with solid credit, savings and good incomes. And they are using all of them to get into markets they never thought they'd be able to just two years ago." For other households still standing on the sidelines, "the risk that they might miss an opportunity to buy a 'dream house' has become greater than the chance house prices could decline further," he says. "Of course, they could, but these households aren't speculators and won't want or need to sell soon, nor will they for many years — when prices are certain to have risen in nominal terms. My sense is that there are lots of households like these, but in many cases, they lack enough remaining capital gains, enough savings or access to enough credit." He says the credit markets need to improve in order to bring them back into the market. "This is particularly true of California, where so much of the stock requires a jumbo mortgage. So long as this part of the mortgage finance industry is impaired, so long as downpayment requirements are 30%, so long as spreads are high, it's likely to be a quiet marketplace." (www.ocregister.com)

Orange County Register (9/26/09); Jonathan Lansner and Jeff Collins

HUD Secretary: Housing Crisis Improving, Not Over

The head of the federal agency working to stabilize the nation's slumping housing market says more homes are being saved from foreclosure as lenders rework mortgages, but cautioned that the crisis is not over yet. U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan said on Sept. 21 that there are other signs of an improving housing market, such as the slowing decline in prices. He estimated that more than 500,000 homes will be saved from foreclosure this year. Donovan was testifying at a field hearing of the U.S. Senate Housing Subcommittee in northern New Jersey, where residents have been hit hard by job losses and home foreclosures. The number of New Jersey homes returned to lenders in August increased 17% to 877 from the same period a year ago. That compares to 16% at the national level, according to RealtyTrac, Inc. (www.philly.com)

Philadelphia Inquirer (9/21/09); Victor Epstein, Associated Press

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Housing Market May Be Stabilizing, Lennar Chief Says

Though home builder Lennar Corp. had a rough third quarter, its executives seem to be seeing the light at the end of the tunnel for the company and for the housing market. “We’re gaining confidence that we’re getting much closer to the end of this housing-led downturn,” said Lennar Chief Executive Stuart Miller. “A combination of low prices, lower interest rates and government incentives have worked to pique the interest of primary buyers and dispel the taboo about home purchases that has deterred so many from the market.” Lennar divisions have seen an increase in traffic and general consumer confidence as the sales and pricing plunge has slowed or stabilized, Miller said. But, he said, the future is still murky. Ongoing foreclosures continue adding to inventory, mortgage rates are fluctuating and tax credit programs are potentially nearing their end. Upswings in unemployment and gas prices continue to pose downside risk. “By no means would I suggest that housing is out of the woods and recovered,” he said. “To the contrary, many headwinds remain.” (www.latimes.com)

Los Angeles Times (9/21/09); Tiffany Hsu

New York Appraisals Get Shortchanged

Prices have dropped by as much as 30% in the last year in New York City, but agents, mortgage brokers and even some appraisers there say they suspect that some appraisals are mistakenly low. Among the reasons they cite: First, with sales volume having dropped by nearly 50% at the beginning of the year and only recently having reached more normal levels, appraisers are often hard pressed to find the comparable sales that allow them to come up with accurate appraisals. Second, at a time when local expertise is crucial, recent changes in national lending practices have resulted in the assignment of many appraisers who are not familiar with local markets, brokers and appraisers say. Subtleties like the inherently higher value of a second full bathroom in a two-bedroom than in a one-bedroom, or the difference between addresses on Lexington Avenue and First Avenue, can be lost on someone who doesn’t know Manhattan. And without a stockpile of comparable sales for reference, “you have to really know the local market, so you can go beyond the raw sales data and use all the subjective factors you can to really tell the story about a property,” said Jonathan J. Miller, the president of Manhattan appraisal firm Miller Samuel. Dean Feldman, an executive vice president at Halstead Property, said that he recently met with an out-of-town appraiser for a two-bedroom apartment that had been combined from a studio and a one-bedroom. “This person did not understand what a combined apartment was, and he kept asking me if there were two deeds for it,” Feldman said. “I had to explain that this was a co-op and it was a legal combination. It turned out fine, but I basically had to teach him.” (www.nytimes.com)

New York Times (9/27/09); Vivian S. Toy