

## In this issue: Signs for your jobsite

The State Building Office now requires that COVID-19 safety posters be visible to employees and visitors, including signage posted at all entrances to a jobsite. If there is no actual entrance, signs may be posted on porta johns. Once the permanent structure is built, posters must be displayed at the entrances while work continues. Contractors should expect random jobsite inspections for compliance. *Full story on page 2.*

**For copies of four required jobsite safety signs, see the pull-out centerspread of this issue.**



# O'Donnell team takes RIBA reins for '20-'21



President  
Carol A. O'Donnell

Vice President  
James G. Deslandes Sr.

Treasurer  
Jason M. DaPonte

Secretary  
Alexander A. Mitchell

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

The Rhode Island Builders Association's first woman president and her team were sworn in during RIBA's first mostly-virtual Annual Meeting on October 6<sup>th</sup>.

Carol O'Donnell of CRM Modular Homes became the association's 38<sup>th</sup> president after being installed by Immediate Past President David A. Caldwell Jr., during a small assembly at RIBA headquarters in East Providence, which included about 10 people. Maintaining strict COVID-19 protocols, the group included the new officers, Executive Officer John Marcantonio and two staffers.

The general membership participated in the meeting via Zoom. Also joining via Zoom were Gov. Gina Raimondo and Congressman David Cicilline. Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea attended in person

President O'Donnell was presented with a proclamation from Gov. Raimondo and a certificate from Secretary Gorbea to honor her election. The three dignitaries also offered congratulatory remarks.

Ms. O'Donnell, principal of CRM Modular Homes, based in Johnston, has been active in leadership roles not only in RIBA and its Professional Women in Building Council (PWB) for many years. *Related story on page 12.*

Along with the election and installation of officers and directors, business included changes to the RIBA bylaws (Article VIII- Sections 2, 3, 4 and 6, Article IX – Sections 1), essentially having to do with organization of the Board of Directors.

In her inaugural remarks, Ms. O'Donnell vowed to build on the achievements of her predecessors, and to

*see ANNUAL MEETING...page 7*

## FEATURED PRODUCTS AND SERVICES FOR NOVEMBER

*Middle Section*

### Meet RIBA's new president

The Rhode Island Builders Association's first woman president exemplifies hard work and achievement.

*Page 12*

### State trains COVID inspectors for jobsites

*The Rhode Island Builder* is there as the State Building Office trains its first group of inspectors for jobsite COVID compliance.

*Page 2*

### RIBA continues to charge ahead with training programs

RIBA's Contractor Development Program, free for members and their employees, and the Workforce Development Program, continue to expand.

*Pages 4, 5, 27-30*

### 2021 Directory advertising still available

Ad space is still available at low rates in RIBA's 2021 Membership Directory and Buyer's Guide.

*Page 11*

## State inspectors headed for construction jobsites

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

"You're there to help contractors, to be part of their team at the jobsite."

That was the word from Steven J. Antonson Sr. of the State Building Office/Dept. of Business Regulation, on September 24<sup>th</sup>.

The scene was a jobsite on Nightingale Avenue in Warwick, and Mr. Antonson's audience consisted of nine trainees who would become COVID-19 inspectors for the Dept. of Business Regulation.

Hosting the trainees were Dwayne Smith, project manager, and a crew from Caldwell and Johnson Inc., who were doing a "gut remodel" on the Warwick Neck waterfront home.

Mr. Antonson took trainees through the inspection procedure, beginning with step 1: Interviewing the person in charge, Mr. Smith in this case, about whether proper COVID protocols were being followed on the jobsite. Trainees were instructed to give the person in charge a packet containing a



**The Rhode Island Builder is there as Project Manager Dwayne Smith of Caldwell and Johnson Inc., center, reviews a checklist during a training session for state COVID-19 inspectors at his Warwick Neck residential jobsite. Just to Mr. Smith's right is Stephen Antonson of the State Building Office/Dept. of Business Regulation, who is conducting the training.**

checklist of protocols, the state's Guidelines for Construction (as printed in the October issue of *The Rhode Island Builder*), and illustrated guidelines from ReopeningRI.com. These include "Rules to Keep You safe at Work," "Employer Screening, Team and Records Guidance," "Employer Cleaning Guidance," and a checklist (to be signed by employers) indicating that they have developed a "COVID-19 Control Plan," a template for which is included in the packet, and on page 22 of this issue.

The packet also contains safety posters to be placed in high-traffic areas on the jobsite - also available in the centerspread of this issue.

### *What inspectors look for*

- Whether employees and those visiting the site are wearing face coverings. The number of employees and visitors will be counted.

- Whether social distancing is being practiced.

- Whether a jobsite contact person has been appointed who is familiar with regulations and guidelines, and who maintains an employee log for purposes of contact tracing. Each trade may have its own employee log.

- Whether a COVID-19 Control Plan is established and available, including a response plan for all trades.

- Whether clean restrooms, porta johns or portable wash stations are available for handwashing and hand sanitizing.

- Whether the area is thoroughly cleaned daily, with a work log of cleanings available. High-touch surfaces must be cleaned regularly.

- Whether all entrants to the site are screened, and that required safety posters are visible to employees and visitors, in-

see *INSPECTIONS...page 36*

### The Rhode Island Builder

Official publication of the  
Rhode Island Builders Association  
since 1951

#### Officers of the Rhode Island Builders Association

President ..... Timothy A. Stasiunas  
Vice President..... Carol O'Donnell  
Treasurer ..... Jason M. DaPonte  
Secretary ..... James Deslandes Sr.

#### The Rhode Island Builder Report

Publisher..... John Marcantonio  
Editor ..... Paul F. Eno

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### DEADLINE FOR THE DECEMBER ISSUE

All copy, ads and photos must be to us by

## Friday, October 30

E-mail material to [builder@newriverpress.com](mailto:builder@newriverpress.com) or fax: (401) 356-0913



## President's Message



Carol O'Donnell

## Ready to go to work, Thank you for the honor!

Thank you for your trust in electing me president of the Rhode Island Builders Association, and for the great privilege. Being the first woman ever to hold this office is a great honor in itself. But I, like most of you, am a builder and remodeler, and a second-generation one at that.

Always, but especially in these difficult times, RIBA is not only a family, but a lifeline for all of us. Together, we are navigating the pandemic and will come out stronger.

As president, where do I hope to take RIBA? First, I wish to follow in the footsteps of Tim Stasiunas and my other great predecessors. Together with Vice President Jim Deslandes, Treasurer Jason DaPonte, and Secretary Alex Mitchell, I want to see RIBA continue to be the envy of HBAs all over America.

We pledge to continue, and expand, our Contractor Development Program, keeping it tuition-free for members and their employees. And we will keep building up our trade training programs, which are so important for our industry and our state's economy.

We will continue to be a key force for legislative advocacy for our industry and our members at the State House, to offer the best insurance products through our Builders Insurance Group, to bring critical information resources to our members, along with the best medical and dental plans.

We will work even harder to get our members' services and products out to the buying public through our publications, social media and RIBAlist.com. And, when it's again possible to do so in person, we will bring back all the great networking events that are so valuable to our members.

In addition, I plan to expand our outreach to our Latino and other minority residential contractors, and to women contractors. This will expand RIBA's membership to make us even stronger as we represent a united front on behalf of our industry.

None of this could be done without the hard work of our great executive officer, John Marcantonio, and the amazing RIBA staff. I look forward to working with them.

Thank you again for your confidence in me. There is strength in numbers, and there is strength in unity.

Let's all work together to take the Rhode Island Builders Association to even greater heights!



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# Looking Ahead

## November 2020

♦ **Ongoing: Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) - Basic Carpentry** - Recruiting continues for VESL a virtual class to begin Nov. 2. For details, contact Betty Bernal at (401) 500-9146 or [bbernal@ribuilders.org](mailto:bbernal@ribuilders.org), or register online at <https://ribuilders.org/vesl-training-program-details>.

🔧 ♦ **November 2<sup>nd</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2 Credit Hours** - Topic is Creative Shingle Design. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 27.*

♦ **November 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>: RIBA Contractor Training - OSHA 10-Hour Course** - 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day. Taught via Zoom. Course is FREE for members and their employees. For more information and to register, contact Elise Geddes, [egeddes@ribuilders.org](mailto:egeddes@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400. *Details on page 29.*

♦ **November 6<sup>th</sup>: RIBA Contractor Training** - Topic is Painting 101. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 29.*

🔧 ♦ **November 9<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2 Credit Hours** - Topic is Blower Door and Air Leakage Testing. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 27.*


♦ **November 12<sup>th</sup>: RIBA Contractor Training** - Topic is Basic HR for Small Construction Businesses. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 29.*

🔧 ♦ **November 13<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 1 Credit Hour** - Topic is Construction Safety Protocols for COVID-19. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 28.*

🔧 ♦ **November 16<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 4 Credit Hours** - Topic is Lead RRP Refresher. *Details on Page 28.*

♦ **November 17<sup>th</sup>: RIBA Contractor Training** - Topic is Siding 101. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 30.*

*More information, registration and payment for most RIBA events is available at [RIBUILDERS.org](http://RIBUILDERS.org).*

 Designates a course eligible for Rhode Island and/or Massachusetts continuing education credits. Contact RIBA for confirmation.

 Indicates a RIBA-sponsored event.

◆ **November 18<sup>th</sup>: RIBA Contractor Training** - Topic is Start and Grow Your Construction Business Taught via Zoom. Details on page 30.

◆ **November 20<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 3 Credit Hours** - Topic is Kitchen Design and Installation. Taught via Zoom. Details on page 28.

◆ **November 30<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 5 Credit Hours** - Topic is Residential Blueprint Reading. Taught via Zoom. Details on page 28.

## February 2021

**February 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>:** 2021 Design & Construction Week and International Builders Show, sponsored in part by the National Association of Home Builders, will be an All-Virtual Event. Visit [Buildersshow.com](http://Buildersshow.com) for information and to register.

## April 2021

◆ **April 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>: 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Rhode Island Home Show, Featuring the Rhode Island Flower & Garden Show and The Energy Expo** - Call (401) 438-7400 or e-mail [homeshow@ribuilders.org](mailto:homeshow@ribuilders.org). Details on page 37 and at [RIBAHomeShow.com](http://RIBAHomeShow.com).

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### Take more RIBA classes online at [RIBAEducates.com](http://RIBAEducates.com)

*Visit [RIBAEducates.com](http://RIBAEducates.com) for access to 24-7 continuing education not listed above!*

*Online courses include Scaffold Safety, Workplace Safety, Confined Spaces, Ladder Safety and more, each worth one credit hour of state-mandated continuing education. All RIBA courses are FREE of tuition charges for members and their employees.*

*Just use your code at the online checkout. NEED A CODE?*

*CALL RIBA AT (401) 438-7400. Non-members: \$12 per credit hour.*

*For information about online or on-site courses:*

*Contact Bob Salvas, [bsalvas@ribuilders.org](mailto:bsalvas@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400.*



# RIBA thanks these companies for joining, renewing or applying for membership

## Renewed Members

American Tile & Marble Co., Inc.  
Automatic Temperature Controls  
Butera Building LLC  
Case Construction Co.  
Chase Masonry LLC  
Civil CADD Services Inc.  
CLEAResult  
DeMelo Construction  
Desormier Construction LLC  
Diamond Hill Residential Group  
Doug Michel Construction Inc.  
Durkin Cottage Realty  
Edgewood Arms Inc.  
F&S Electric Inc.  
Fortin Place LLC  
H.V. Holland Inc. Heating/AC  
Hardwood Design Inc.  
Holland Electric Inc.  
Island Home Services LLC  
J&M Transfer Inc.  
J. DiCenzo Construction Co., Inc.  
Jaimar Building Co.  
Jalex Builders LLC  
Kay-Cor Contractors Inc.  
KJ Maul Construction LLC

Vincent Ricci  
Amanda Mahon  
David Butera  
Frank Gustafson  
Benjamin Chase  
Eric Wishart  
John Harrison  
Joel DeMelo  
Larry Desormier  
Donald Pasek  
Douglas Michel  
James Durkin  
Ryan Taylor  
Frederick Souza  
Zach Schartner  
Edward Holland  
William Bivona  
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Lincoln Energy Mechanical Services Inc.  
Lucena Brothers Inc.  
MJM Construction Inc.  
Moran Properties LLC  
Next Level Building Services  
Omega Financial Corp.  
Read's Landscape Construction Inc.  
Rite Glass Inc.  
Shalvey Brothers Landscape Inc.  
Stateside Vinyl Siding Co.  
Two Brothers Quality Painting  
Valente Construction  
Wickford Appliance & Lighting  
Wm. J. Lamar & Sons Inc.  
Woodstock Financial LLC

Jane Sullivan  
Anthony Vessella  
David Lucena  
Kelly O'Connell  
Steven Moran  
Alfred Olsen  
Mark Marcus  
John Read  
Russell Carpentier  
Thomas Shalvey  
Ronald Lariviere  
Daniel Woodford  
Michael Valente  
Chris Grace  
William Ricci  
Edward Maggiacomo

## Applications/Pending Members\*

Michelle Almeida  
Stephen Belcher  
Robert Blease  
Edwin Boj Poroj  
Raymond Carreiro, Jr.  
Pedro Dishmeyer-Duran  
Thomas Fagan  
Justin Gardiner  
Carol Gill  
Daniel Harris  
Christian Heil  
Steven Huard Nunez  
Niara Ijezie  
Mark Kravatz

Keith Lambert  
Joseph Locascio  
Scott Luckut  
Angelo Mancini  
Dianne Masters  
James McNeill  
Franchesca Meson  
Mattix Murphy  
Nathaniel Noland  
Jose Tavares  
Beth Tetreault  
Devin Tracey  
Lisa Vance  
Lynn Weinstein

\*Subject to registration with the Rhode Island Contractors' Registration and Licensing Board.  
Company name will be printed once application is approved.



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**Carol O'Donnell, the Rhode Island Builders Association's first woman president, is sworn in by Immediate Past President David A. Caldwell Jr. at RIBA headquarters during a mostly virtual Annual Meeting on October 6<sup>th</sup>.**



**President O'Donnell receives a certificate honoring her election from Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea.**

## **ANNUAL MEETING...***...from page 1*

meet new goals for membership services and growth.

"I wish to follow in the footsteps of Tim Stasiunas and my other great predecessors... I want to see RIBA continue to be the envy of HBAs all over America," Ms. O'Donnell stated.

"The new officers and I pledge to continue, and expand, our Contractor Development Program, keeping it tuition-free for members and their employees. And we will keep building up our trade training programs, which are so important for our industry and our state's economy," she added.

"We will continue to be a key force for legislative advocacy for our industry and our members at the State House, to offer the best insurance products through our Builders Insurance Group, to bring critical information resources to our members, along with the best medical and dental plans."

The new president also vowed to continue promoting members' services and products through social media and RIBAlist.com.

Also elected and installed were Vice President James G. Deslandes of Deslandes Construction Inc., Treasurer Jason DaPonte of Restivo Monacelli LLC, and Secretary Alexander Mitchell of Meridian Custom Homes.

The officers of RIBA's Professional Women in Building Council (PWB) were installed as well, including President Linda Bohmbach of Home Healthsmith, Vice President Jacqueline Pagel of Pella Windows, and Secretary/Treasurer Sophia Karvunis of ClosetsEtc.

Elected and installed as directors, for terms ending in 2023 are: David C. Baud of Baud Builders, Joseph A. Casali of Joe Casali Engineering Inc., William Dawson of Pawtucket Credit Union, Robert F. DeBlois Jr. of DeBlois Building Co., Michael DeCesare of DeCesare Building Co., Sean Finnegan of Coventry Lumber Inc., John Peters of Ecologic Spray Foam Insulation Inc., Jhonny Leyva of Heroica Construction, Frank Bragantin of Ferland Corp., Dean W. Martineau of Capstone Properties, Kevin Moran of Moran Home Improvements, John Pagliaro of J.P. Construction Inc., Marc Petrowicz of Unilock.

For more information, contact RIBA at (401) 438-7400.



**Just sworn in are Vice President James Deslandes, right, and Secretary Alexander Mitchell.**



**Outgoing President Timothy A. Stasiunas swears in new officers of the Professional Women in Building Council. From left are President Linda Bohmbach, Vice President Jacqueline Pagel and Secretary/Treasurer Sophia Karvunis.**

**For RIBA  
membership information  
contact Elise Geddes  
401-438-7400  
or [egeddes@ribuilders.org](mailto:egeddes@ribuilders.org)**





*Clockwise from upper left, members and guests join the Annual Meeting remotely, Gov. Gina Raimondo joins the call to congratulate President Carol O' Donnell. RIBA Director of Operations Elizabeth Carpenter unveils the traditional composite portrait of outgoing President Timothy A. Stasiunas as Executive Officer John Marcantonio announces the presentation. At left, the incoming and outgoing presidents look on.*



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## Professional Women in Building : PWB NEWS



*Congratulations to our own Carol O'Donnell for becoming the first female Vice President and now President of Rhode Island Builders Association. Carol is an incredible inspiration to many and we look forward to the year ahead under her leadership.*



*Please welcome our incoming Professional Women in Building Officers: President Linda Bohmbach of Home Healthsmith; Vice President Jacqueline Pagel of Pella Windows & Doors; and Sophia Karvunis of Closets etc as Treasurer and Secretary. Stay tuned for all we have planned for 2021!*

### **PWB Officers**

Linda Bohmbach - President  
Jacqueline Pagel - Vice President  
Sophia Karvunis - Treasurer

### **Want to learn more about the PWB?**

Please visit our site for contact info, up-coming events and news at <http://ribuilders.org/professional-women-in-building>



# RIBA Directory ad campaign continues

While the advertising campaign for the Rhode Island Builders Association's 2021 *Membership Directory and Buyer's Guide* wraps up in November, there is still space available.

The *Directory* is a great annual way to reach virtually everybody – contractors, subs and the public alike, with your product or service.

First of all, members need to understand that what goes into the *Directory* about you and your company comes directly from the information you provide to RIBA.

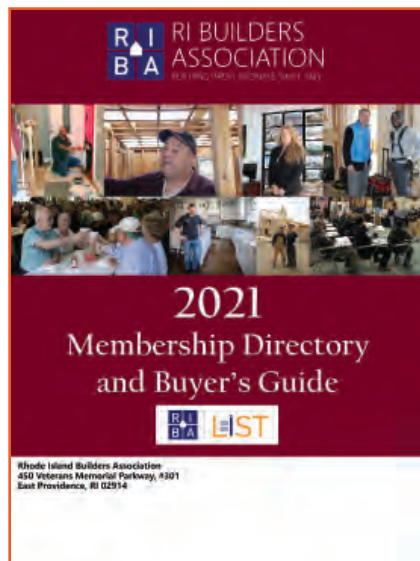
Members should log on to their account at RIBuilders.org to update their information. Those details carry over to the printed *Directory* and to the association's online directory, RIBalist.com, as well.

For more information, or if you don't have a username and password to access your information at RIBuilders.org, contact Elizabeth Carpenter at (401) 438-7400 or [ecarpenter@ribuilders.org](mailto:ecarpenter@ribuilders.org).

## Ad space still available

The RIBA *Membership Directory and Buyer's Guide* remains popular with contractors and the public alike, and there's no better venue to showcase your business to that "everybody" audience!

Members should have received full information by mail about



*Directory* advertising. The low advertising rates remain the same as in previous years. The *Directory* will be printed, and distribution will begin, in January and last all year.


The deadline for premium ad positions (inside the front and back covers, the center-spread, and the back cover) will be October 16<sup>th</sup>.

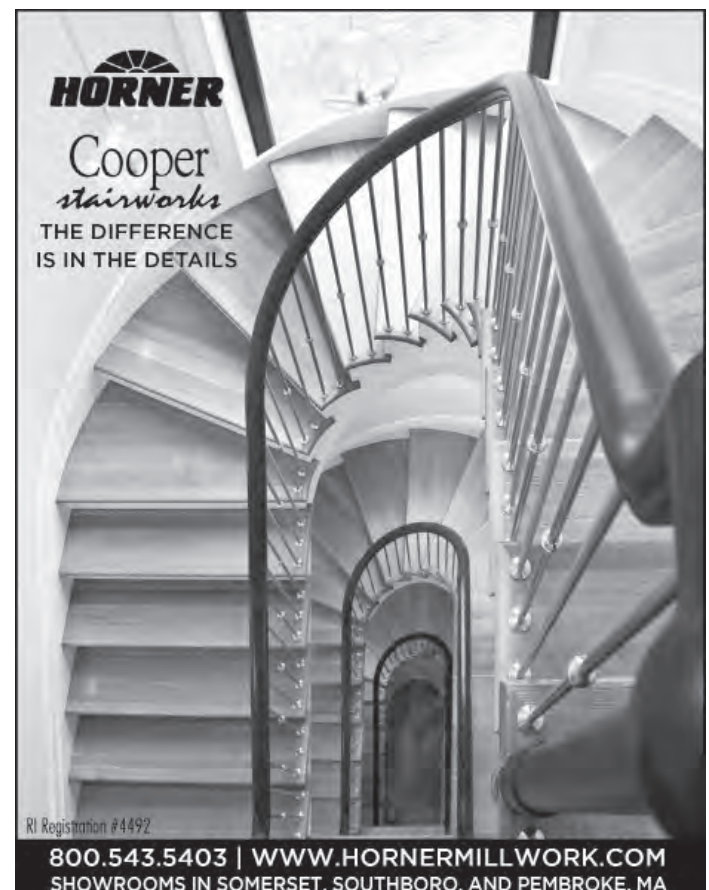
Once again, RIBA will have a drawing for one advertiser to win an additional ad: free, full-page and full-color. Any advertiser who purchased their *Directory* ad by October 30<sup>th</sup> will be eligible for the November drawing.

The final deadline for *Directory* advertising is November 6<sup>th</sup>.

## Discounts!

RIBA offers advertising "package deals" with the *Directory* and the award-winning *Rhode Island Builder* monthly magazine. Advertisers who opt for both publications will earn a 5 percent discount on their total advertising cost.

Use the advertising information package you received from RIBA. Advertising information also is online at [NewRiverPress.com/ribaads](http://NewRiverPress.com/ribaads), or call Paul Eno at (401) 250-5760, ext. 1. 

## Member Profile: Carol O'Donnell of CRM Modular Homes

# Coming up the hard way!

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

She has gone from a young woman builder who wasn't taken seriously to a leader in the industry, the presidency of three companies and now the new president of the Rhode Island Builders Association.

She's Carol O'Donnell, a familiar face to RIBA members, a tireless volunteer, and the one who now heads the administration that will take the association into the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



Carol O'Donnell

Carol grew up in the residential construction industry.

"My father had a small construction company. He even had a backhoe. I used to be the one to help him as a laborer, as a young lady when I was in high school," the Providence native recalls.

After graduating from Johnston High School, Carol cast her eye toward data entry, went to the Community College of Rhode Island, then nabbed a job at the Berkander Co. on Broad Street in Providence. But homes were in her DNA.

"I just didn't want to work at data entry anymore, so I began taking classes for my real estate license. But then I started to learn about modular homes, and I converted to being a contractor," she says.

Carol was already buying vacant lots at tax sales in Providence. And, suddenly, the shoe was on the other foot. Her dad was working for her.

"I hired my father to dig the foundations!"

Carol was now a builder, and she stuck with modular homes.

"I sold to other contractors as well as to private individuals. I also branched out from the lots into spec homes. From there, I got into a little more of customization, then into the retail market instead of just spec houses," she explains.

Carol founded CRM Modular Homes in 1988.

At the same time, here was a woman in what was historically not only a male industry but a macho one.

"I wasn't taken seriously, but people I worked with supported

me. That's why I reached out to trade associations like the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), and then RIBA."

CRM joined RIBA in 2007. Meanwhile, Carol's leadership qualities knew no bounds. Over the years, she has been a program coordinator at the YWCA, an instructor at Rosie's Girls camp, president of RIBA's Professional Women in Building Council (PWB), vice chair of the Contractors' Registration and Licensing Board (CRLB),

president of the state chapter of NAWIC, not to mention serving in many leadership roles in RIBA, including secretary and vice president.

Carol also served on the Advisory Board of the Center for Women & Enterprise, Habitat for Humanity Women's Build, and on the Fire Safety Code Board of Appeal and Review. She has been honored a number of times, including with the Extraordinary Woman Award.

And Carol kept improving her knowledge, studying construction industry technology at Clemson University in 2010.

CRM joined RIBA in 2007.

Today, she is president not only of CRM, but of Emmy LLC and of Emerald Re-Construction LLC, a company she runs with fellow RIBA member Thom Miranda.

"When I first joined RIBA, I made it a point to reach out and volunteer my time, and did a lot of work with PWB, working to get a lot more women to join, Carol says.

When John Marcantonio became RIBA's executive officer in 2011, he quickly noticed Carol's leadership ability and volunteer spirit.

"John asked me to join some different committees, and then I just slowly worked my way up."

Thanks to Carol, the "home" was back in the Home Show from 2012 through 2014: the model home, that is. The modular structures were the Home Show centerpieces in those years and attracted enormous crowds.

As with any member, Carol appreciates RIBA's benefits.

"I love the magazine, and I always use the Member Rebate Program. I have my insurance through the Builders Insurance Group (BIG), and we even brought NAWIC over to BIG. I love the networking.... I think the benefits are all great!"

Now, as RIBA's first woman president, Carol has set her sights high. Her inaugural President's Message on page 6 will tell you all about it!

### **CRM Modular Homes**

**President:** Carol A. O'Donnell

**RIBA member since:** 2007

**Focus:** Building & Remodeling

**Founded:** 1988

**Based:** Johnston, Rhode Island



# Net Zero Energy Pilot, 2021 and Beyond

National Grid launched an innovative Zero Net Energy Pilot in 2018 to support and increase the number of Zero Energy Homes in Rhode Island. At the time, only a handful of these were built in the state each year. Read on to find out what strategies the Pilot has used and where the market is now.

## *Pilot Strategy and Activities:*

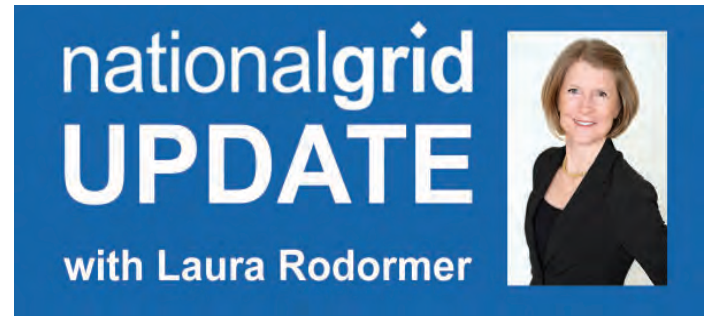
The Zero Net Energy Pilot is now in the third year and continues to serve as a comprehensive effort to engage industry stakeholders, identify challenges and offer solutions for building homes with low energy loads that are comfortable, durable and have excellent indoor air quality. Highlights include:

## *Education and Awareness*

- In 2018 National Grid hosted an interactive kickoff forum for people to share ideas on how to move the market forward.
- A Zero Net Energy exhibit was created for the 2019 Rhode Island Home Show in partnership with the Rhode Island Builders Association and Rhode Island career and technical education (CTE) students, showcasing how home construction has evolved over the decades, and highlighting local Zero Net Energy designers, builders, and homes.

### *Workforce Development & Training*

- A Zero Net Energy Core Leadership team of local experts was



formed to facilitate sharing of technical knowledge.

- Passive House Consultant certification was offered to local professionals.
- Passes were offered for the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association's (NESEA's) Building Energy and Passive House conferences to support learning and networking.
- Workshops, trainings and tours of local Zero Net Energy projects took place across Rhode Island.

### *Performance Acceleration*

- Projects achieving Dept. of Energy (DOE) Zero Energy Ready (ZER), Passive House and the Rhode Island Stretch Code qualified for enhanced incentives.

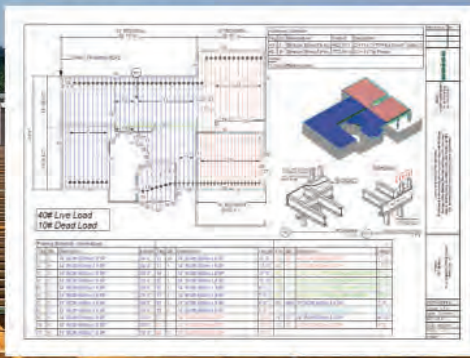
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# Zoning, planning boards finding their stride with virtual hearings

By Paul F. Eno Editor

How are things on the planning and zoning scene, now that Rhode Island's cities and towns have settled into the realities of COVID-19?

*The Rhode Island Builder* spoke with land-use attorney Joelle Rocha on September 24<sup>th</sup> for the latest update.

"Some communities were slow to get back online when it came to holding meetings of their planning and zoning boards. However, in the last few months, everybody is doing so," said Ms. Rocha, a member of the Rhode Island Builders Association and a key player in monitoring land-use issues.

"At the beginning, it was a little quirky when it came to the technology. Some communities were very good at it right off the bat. But, at this point, they have all come into their own. There are some in-person

meetings, believe it or not, and it's always better to do these things in person. But it's also difficult, given the COVID situation," she added.

Then there are communities that aren't using the video feature.

"As you can imagine, it's hard to present a development over the phone. But the vast percentage of communities are doing a pretty good job," Ms. Rocha said.

"I will say that the whole situation has improved public awareness of projects, in my opinion, and if you go on some of these community websites now, such as Lincoln's or South Kingstown's, many of the documents for pending applications are online."

These documents usually include an announcement of forthcoming meetings, the site plan, the correspondence, and the whole narrative, according to Ms. Rocha.

"That's a really good feature that I hope

is here to stay," she commented.

"As I've said, some communities doing online very well with this. I had five meetings this past week that I would never have been able to do had they all been in-person."

The scenario has also meant a number of extensions.

"Because of COVID, nothing much happened for a few months earlier this year. Clients don't have to pay you to stand around for an hour to get a five-minute extension. And it also allows you to have experts on call. It's an interesting way of doing things," said Ms. Rocha.

"At the same time, you miss that interaction with the board members, and seeing

see *BOARDS...* page 34



Joelle Rocha

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# USDOL proposes new rule to define independent contractors

## National Association of Home Builders

The U.S. Dept. of Labor (DOL) has announced a proposed rule clarifying the definition of employee under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) as it relates to independent contractors.

In a statement, the DOL said its proposed rule:

- Adopts an “economic reality” test to determine a worker’s status as an FLSA employee or an independent contractor. The test considers whether a worker is in business for himself or herself (independent contractor) or is economically dependent on a putative employer for work (employee);

- Identifies and explains two “core factors,” specifically the nature and degree of the worker’s control over the work, and the worker’s opportunity for profit or loss based on initiative and/or investment. These factors help determine if a worker is economically dependent on someone else’s business or is in business for himself or herself;

- Identifies three other factors that

may serve as additional guideposts in the analysis: the amount of skill required for the work; the degree of permanence of the working relationship between the worker and the potential employer; and whether the work is part of an integrated unit of production; and

- Advises that the actual practice is more relevant than what may be contractually or theoretically possible in determining whether a worker is an employee or an independent contractor.

## Call for clarity

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) has called on DOL to take steps to provide greater clarity to employers and workers in light of the often conflicting

federal tests that exist to determine who is an employee and who is an independent contractor.

The proposed rule would also provide more clarity to shield more employers from misclassification claims, which occur when an employer incorrectly defines a worker as an independent contractor rather than an employee.

NAHB plan to review the rule in more detail once it is published in the *Federal Register*, the statement said, and interested parties will have 30 days to submit comments.

For more information contact David Jaffe at NAHB at (800) 368-5242 x8317 or [djaffe@nahb.org](mailto:djaffe@nahb.org), or Alexis Moch at x8407 or [amoch@nahb.org](mailto:amoch@nahb.org).



# NAHB monitors complex building supply issues

## National Association of Home Builders

Lumber prices increased 14.9 percent in August, marking the largest four-month gain since such data was first recorded in 1949 and the second-largest gain since seasonally adjusted data became available in 1975. Such a sharp increase has put unnecessary pressure on home owners and builders alike to figure out how to close the gap.

Former NAHB Chairman Randy Noel, a custom home builder from LaPlace, Louisiana., received a lumber quote early this month for more than \$28,000 — twice what he paid for the same lumber on a comparable project in February 2019. Oriented strand board alone, which Mr. Noel’s company uses frequently in its projects, had increased from \$7.50 per sheet to \$26 per sheet.

Because the homes have already been sold, Mr. Noel is looking toward alternative building materials, such as steel, to help minimize the cost increases. Not all builders will be able to close the gap, though.

“I know builders who have had to call customers and give them their deposit back and say, ‘I can’t build your house because of the price of lumber,’” he shared. “People already have their loan secured and can’t increase the price.”

Appraisals are likely to compound that issue, Mr. Noel added, as comparable sales of existing homes aren’t increasing sharply enough to factor into appraisers’ equations. Pent-up demand is also driving up the price of lots, which will need to be factored into home prices going forward as well.

The best immediate-term solution Mr. Noel sees on the horizon is to remove tariffs on Canadian lumber.



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### Quick Facts

- Can be painted any color with exterior grade latex paint
- Easy to cut, rout, drill and fasten
- Can be installed using wood-working tools and methods
- Exceptional durability
- Resistant to rotting, cracking, splitting, and is virtually free from termites
- Maintains a high level of dimensional stability during periods of moisture and temperature change
- Suitable for ground contact



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## REOPENING RI

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- are a close contact of a person who tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days<sup>2</sup>

For the safety of our staff and guests, please **SELF SCREEN** for symptoms of COVID-19. Please do not enter if you have any of the following symptoms:<sup>1</sup>



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muscle or  
body aches



sore throat or  
runny/stuffy nose



headache, nausea,  
vomiting or diarrhea



fatigue



cough, shortness  
of breath  
or difficulty



sudden loss of  
taste or smell

### RULES TO REMEMBER



When in public, wear a cloth face covering over your nose and mouth.



Stay at least six feet (about two arms' length) from other people.

<sup>1</sup>You may enter if symptoms experienced can be explained by known allergies or non-infectious illnesses.

<sup>2</sup>Does not apply to people who come into contact with people with symptoms of COVID-19 during the course of their daily work while wearing full and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

**For questions or concerns, please call the Department of Business Regulation at 401-889-5550 or visit [dbr.ri.gov/questioncomplaints/](https://dbr.ri.gov/questioncomplaints/)**



## REOPENING RI

### Rules to keep you safe at work

#### Going to work



Stay home if you're sick;  
return to work only when  
cleared to do so.



Undergo symptom screenings  
before entering your workplace.



Wear a clean cloth or  
surgical mask over your  
nose and mouth.

#### Interacting



Keep 6 feet  
distant from others  
at all times.



Stay behind any  
shield that is meant  
to be between you  
and customers.



Keep in-person  
interactions to  
small groups.



Avoid  
communal areas.

#### Hygiene



Clean and disinfect  
shared surfaces  
before you use them.



Wash your hands  
frequently with soap  
and water.  
If unavailable, use sanitizer  
with >60% alcohol.



Avoid touching  
your eyes, nose  
and mouth.



Cover coughs  
and sneezes  
with your elbow  
or with a tissue  
you throw away.

**Note:** This is a summary. Please refer to full guidance at [ReopeningRI.com](https://reopeningri.com)



Sign #3 you can copy and use on your jobsites. Story on page 2.



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**A Face Covering or Mask MUST Be Worn Here—At All Times.**



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- ✓ **Your face covering can be a scarf, bandana, or a homemade mask.**
- ✓ **It should cover your mouth AND your nose.**

**FACE COVERINGS OR MASKS SHOULD NOT BE WORN BY:**

- ✗ **Anyone whose health would be harmed from wearing a face covering.**
- ✗ **Infants, babies, or children under 2 years old.**

As of April 14, 2020: Customers and employees must wear face coverings, per Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo's Executive Order 20-24.



For more information: **[health.ri.gov/covid](https://health.ri.gov/covid)**



# REOPENING RI

## COVID-19 Control Plan: Template

A business must develop a written COVID-19 Control Plan outlining how its workplace will prevent the spread of COVID-19. A business may fill out this template to fulfill the requirement that it complete a COVID-19 Control Plan. If you have questions, please ask them by emailing: [planquestions@reopeningri.com](mailto:planquestions@reopeningri.com)

This plan **does not** need to be submitted to a state agency for approval but must be retained on the premises of the business and must be made available to the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) in the event of an inspection or outbreak.

### Covid-19 Control Plan

Name of Business:

Address:

Other corporate info, if applicable:

Owner/Manager of Business and contact info:

HR Representative and contact info:

**Face masks and coverings.** To ensure employees comply with face covering requirements, you have (check the boxes to certify):

- ☐ Informed employees of the requirement to wear facemasks unless an employee and/or visitor can easily, continuously, and measurably maintain at least six (6) feet of distance from other employees and/or visitors for the duration of his or her work and/or time in a building.
- ☐ Procured cloth masks (or surgical masks) for all employees.
- ☐ Distributed cloth face masks (or surgical masks) to all employees who need one at no cost and have a plan to distribute additional face masks as the need arises (i.e. in the event of loss or damage).
- ☐ Informed employees of the need to clean their facemask between uses, or to dispose of it between uses (if disposable).
- ☐ Implemented other procedures. Please describe them here (and attach extra pages if needed):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Social distancing and organizing personnel.** To meet social distancing requirements, you have (check the boxes to certify):

- ☐ Implemented staff management policies to reduce the number of employees in the workplace at the same time (e.g. using telework, flexible work hours, staggered shifts, organization of work crews into "pods" or "teams" to mitigate cross-team exposure, or expanding work hours.) Please describe these policies here (and attach extra pages if needed):  
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## R.I. launches incentive program to develop renewable energy storage

A prime issue with renewable energy has been that the power generated is very difficult to store. The Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources (OER), however, says it will provide incentives to help speed development of that technology.

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, OER announced the launch of a \$1.5 million pilot program to encourage “energy storage paired with renewable energy systems.”

“Energy storage is an exciting technology that can help the state meet its clean energy goals,” said State Energy Commissioner Nicholas S. Ucci.

“Electric storage can help match the timing of renewable energy generation with when we need electricity the most. These technologies can also enhance grid resiliency for Rhode Islanders, such as keeping the lights on and critical systems functioning during power outages. This pilot incentive program will provide valuable data and insight on future energy storage growth in the Rhode Island marketplace,” Mr. Ucci commented.

Both residential and commercial projects are eligible for this program, according to OER.

“In order to qualify, all energy storage systems must be paired with a new, renewable installation. Storage projects must also meet the technical requirements of National Grid’s demand response program, called ConnectedSolutions, with the aim of ensuring all systems have the capabilities to participate in demand reductions during peak events and help reduce energy costs for Rhode Island electric customers.”

The incentive program is being made available through Rhode Island Commerce’s Renewable Energy Fund and is assisted by the state’s participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).

Incentives will be made available in four rounds between now and May 2021, according to OER.

More information may be found at the Rhode Island Commerce website: [Commerceri.com/financing/renewable-energy-fund](http://Commerceri.com/financing/renewable-energy-fund).

“The launch of this energy storage pilot program is the latest effort by the state to foster a clean, affordable and reliable energy system for all Rhode Islanders,” an OER statement said.

In January, Gov. Gina Raimondo signed Executive Order 20-01, committing Rhode Island to meet 100 percent of its electricity demand with renewables by 2030. The order directed OER to conduct an economic and energy market analysis and develop actionable policies and programs to reach this goal.

For more information on OER’s programs and initiatives, please visit [Energy.ri.gov](http://Energy.ri.gov). 

*For RIBA  
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Though classes have temporarily moved to Zoom online conferencing, the Rhode Island Builders Association continues the Contractor Training Program in October, expanding its educational offerings for members and their employees! Call for details and to register, contact RIBA Professional Development Manager Bob Salvas at (401) 438-7400 or e-mail [bsalvas@ribuilders.org](mailto:bsalvas@ribuilders.org).

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2 Credit Hours:

### *Creative Shingle Design*

November 2<sup>nd</sup>

**WHEN:** Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8 to 10 a.m.

**WHERE:** Online via Zoom

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees. Non-members, call for pricing options.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One day before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Bob Salvas at [bsalvas@ribuilders.org](mailto:bsalvas@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400.

Join instructor Mike Guertin to learn techniques to design, cut and layer shingle courses into simple and complex images. See how to weave a vine and a husky as examples.

Mike will show you how to design, cut and layer shingle courses into simple and complex images.

You must pre-register for this course. Participants will receive instructions on how to log in to the Zoom session. There will be no admittance to the Zoom session without pre-registration. Participants must provide proof of employment with a member company for the class to be free.



2 Credit Hours:

### *Blower Door and Air Leakage Testing*

November 9<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 8 to 10 a.m.

**WHERE:** Online via Zoom

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees. Non-members, call for pricing options.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One day before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Bob Salvas at [bsalvas@ribuilders.org](mailto:bsalvas@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400.

Rhode Island's building code requires all new homes and some remodeling projects to be tested for air leakage.

Learn when the test can be done, how it is done, and how to prepare for it.

The instructor is Jeremy Dagold

You must pre-register for this course. Participants will receive instructions on how to log in to the Zoom session. Participants must provide proof of employment with a member company for the class to be free.



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1 Credit Hour:

## Construction Safety Protocols for COVID-19

November 13<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Friday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 9 to 10 a.m.

**WHERE:** Online via Zoom

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees. Non-members, call for pricing options.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One day before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Bob Salvas at bsalvas@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

Taught by RIBA Executive Officer John Marcantonio, this class will review workers' personal responsibilities, social distancing, general jobsite and office practices. Also considered will be personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitation and cleanliness, and jobsite visitors. Workers entering occupied buildings and homes will also be discussed.

You must pre-register for this course. Participants will receive instructions on how to log in to the Zoom session. There will be no admittance to the Zoom session without pre-registration. Participants must provide proof of employment with a member company for the class to be free.



3 Credit Hours:

## Kitchen Design & Installation

November 20<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Friday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 8 to 11 a.m.

**WHERE:** Online via Zoom

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees. Non-members, call for pricing options.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One day before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Bob Salvas at bsalvas@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

Taught by Jason Oliveira, this class will cover the basics of designing a well-planned kitchen and how to install the cabinetry. Also discussed will be:

- The design process,
- Material choices for cabinets and counters,
- Utility and appliance placement
- Traffic flow and storage,
- Installation tips and tricks.

You must pre-register for this course. Participants will receive instructions on how to log in to the Zoom session. Participants must provide proof of employment with a member company for the class to be free.



4 Credit Hours:

## Lead RRP Refresher

November 16<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Monday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

**WHERE:** Online via Zoom

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees. Non-members, call for pricing options.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One day before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Bob Salvas at bsalvas@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

Join instructor Scott Asprey for this class, which is a four-hour refresher course for contractors who have their lead renovator/remodeler certification and it is coming up for renewal.

We will review lead hazard controls and update attendees with any changes to regulations.

You must pre-register for this class. Participants will receive instructions on how to log in to the Zoom session. There will be no admittance to the Zoom session without pre-registration. Participants must provide proof of employment with a member company for the class to be free. .



5 Credit Hours:

## Residential Blueprint Reading

November 30<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Monday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**WHERE:** Online via Zoom

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees. Non-members, call for pricing options.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One day before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Bob Salvas at bsalvas@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

Join instructor Carlos Lora for this class, which will provide students with an introduction to the area of residential blueprint reading, construction documents/calculations, and project specifications. During this course students will learn to read the legend, details, specifications, effectively use a scale ruler and find the different trade sections of blueprints/drawings.

You must pre-register for this class. Participants will receive instructions on how to log in to the Zoom session. There will be no admittance to the Zoom session without pre-registration. Participants must provide proof of employment with a member company for the class to be free. .



For RIBA  
membership information  
contact Elise Geddes

401-438-7400 • or [egeddes@ribuilders.org](mailto:egeddes@ribuilders.org)



## OSHA-10 Course November 4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>


**WHEN:** Wednesday and Thursday, November 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day.  
**WHERE:** Online via Zoom  
**COST:** FREE for members and their employees.  
**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One day before first class  
**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Bob Salvas at bsalvas@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

This is a 10-hour class, held over two days by Scott Asprey of Risk & Safety Management. The course is geared to train safety directors, job foremen and field employees in OSHA construction standards. It highlights the areas of major safety concerns, with the intent to reduce accidents on the job site, saving time and money.

Each person completing the course will receive a copy of the OSHA Standard 29 CFR Part 1926 and an OSHA-10 certification card. Every person working on a municipal or state construction project with a total project cost of \$100,000 or more must have card certifying their completion of an OSHA 10-Hour training program on their person at all times while work is being performed.

According to the requirement, the rule applies to "any private person or entity bound by a contractual agreement to provide goods or services to a contractor/developer who must physically enter the place where work is being performed or business is being conducted."


This does not apply to sales representatives, vendors, or to those delivering building materials and supplies/products to a construction site. (Fines can range from \$250 to \$950 per offense, on each day in which a violation occurs.)

You must pre-register for this course. Non-member payment is due upon registration. Participants must provide proof of employment with a member company for the class to be free. 

## Painting 101 November 6<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Friday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 8 to 10 a.m.  
**WHERE:** Online via Zoom  
**COST:** FREE for members and their employees. Non-members, call for pricing options.  
**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One day before class  
**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Bob Salvas at bsalvas@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

Join instructor James DiMarzio to learn best practices for indoor and outdoor painting, including techniques and spraying.

You must pre-register for this course. Participants will receive instructions on how to log in to the Zoom session. Participants must provide proof of employment with a member company for the class to be free. 


## Basic HR for Small Construction Businesses November 12<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 8 to 10 a.m.  
**WHERE:** Online via Zoom  
**COST:** FREE for members and their employees. Non-members, call for pricing options.  
**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One day before class  
**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Bob Salvas at bsalvas@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

Taught by Gary Convertino, this class will help you deal with critical human resources in your construction business.

Topics covered will include:

- Dept. of Labor guidelines,
- Performance evaluations,
- Promotions
- Onboarding/offboarding
- Hiring/recruitment,
- Benefits.

You must pre-register for this course. Participants will receive instructions on how to log in to the Zoom session. Participants must provide proof of employment with a member company for the class to be free. 



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## Meet the Instructors

# It's Merrill and Lough on contract law

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

"Contractors need to be building things, not litigating the details."

That's the message from lawyers Merrill Friedemann and George Lough of Providence-based Gianfrancesco & Friedemann LLP, instructors in the Rhode Island Builders Association's Contractor Development Program. Their seminar: Contract Law.

Among the points they cover: Avoiding legal problems in the first place.

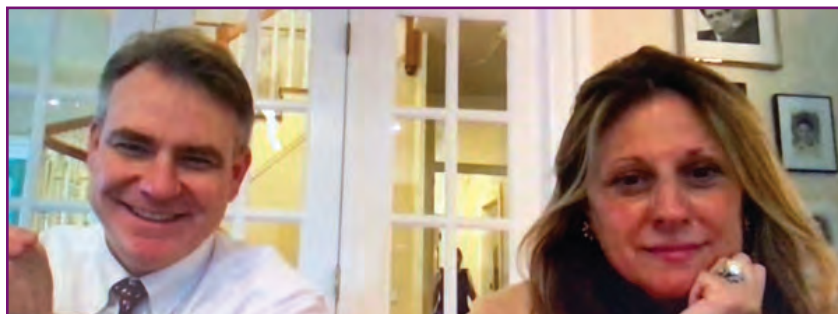
"Trust your gut," says Ms. Friedemann. "When you meet with a potential customer and something doesn't feel right, especially if there's an abundance of work to be done, walk away from that job. People who complain from the start are people who probably will not pay you in full."

More points Ms. Friedemann and Mr. Lough cover:

- Documenting everything.
- Finding the right lawyer who knows construction and insurance litigation.
- The importance of contracts, and what needs to be in them, especially in Rhode Island.
- Making contracts detailed and transparent.
- Much more....

"If the correct language isn't there in the contract, the person contracting that work has at least a credible basis to question the work, and now you're bringing in a lawyer," Mr. Lough comments.

Contract Law was taught as one of the most recent in-person RIBA seminars on February 26<sup>th</sup>, and again as a Zoom teleconference on September 24<sup>th</sup>. It will be offered again in the near future.



**George Lough, left, and Merrill Friedemann of Gianfrancesco & Friedemann LLP, are instructors in RIBA's Contractor Development Program.**

## *Many other classes*

RIBA has been rapidly expanding the Contractor Development Program (CDP), especially because of high demand during the COVID-19 pandemic this year, in support of both the residential construction industry and the Rhode Island economy.

All classes are free of charge for RIBA members and their employees.

The CDP offers a huge curriculum of tuition-free classes for contractors and their employees. These include classes that fulfill continuing-education requirements for Rhode Island.

They include:

- Advanced Framing
- Dealing with Challenging Employees

*see TRAINING...page 33*

## *Siding* November 17<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 8 to 10 a.m.

**WHERE:** Online via Zoom

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees. Non-members, call for pricing options.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One day before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Bob Salvas at bsalvas@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

Join instructor Ed Ladouceur to learn best practices and techniques for outdoor siding of a residential home.

You must pre-register for this course. Participants will receive instructions on how to log in to the Zoom session. Participants must provide proof of employment with a member company for the class to be free.

## *Start and Grow* *Your Construction Business* November 18<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Wednesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 8 to 10:30 a.m.

**WHERE:** Online via Zoom

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees. Non-members, call for pricing options.

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER:** One day before class

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Contact Bob Salvas at bsalvas@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

If you're looking to start your own business or perhaps re-start your business after the health crisis, this class with instructor David Lucier will cover all aspects of successful business ownership. It's a must for those who don't have a lot of business experience.

You must pre-register for this course. Participants must provide proof of employment with a member company for the class to be free.



# Brenda Clement

Director of HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University

*Brenda Clement has over 20 years of experience in the housing and community-development fields. Before assuming her current post, she was executive director of the Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), a not-for-profit umbrella organization for affordable housing and community development activities in Massachusetts, from 2012-2016. She also served as executive director of the Housing Action Coalition of Rhode Island, and of the Housing Network. Ms. Clement is a founding member of the New England Housing Network and served on the board of the National Low Income Housing Coalition for nine years and just recently completed her term as chairwoman. She holds a bachelor of arts in political science/economics from Providence College and a juris doctor from Washington College of Law at American University.*



strong as more people try to build and, as you say, flee from larger cities or areas that are perceived as denser. This was a problem in Rhode Island before COVID, when we were seeing escalating prices and, perhaps, a kind of “Boston Effect”<sup>\*</sup> on the market. So, this too is nothing new, but it has certainly increased.

Again, it’s hard to tell whether this will be permanent, or will it be a “zoomtown” phenomenon, as the literature across the country is starting to call places where people are leaving bigger cities and coming to the next-level-down cities or metro areas.

We know anecdotally from talking to folks in cities and towns that they’re seeing a large uptick of people using their second homes and vacation homes as their primary dwellings. They might have used them just in the summer, but now they’re staying put over the longer term.

So, it’s happening, but we don’t know how widespread it is. And we don’t have a good way to collect the data on that, much of which is proprietary data that we don’t have access to. But we are watching these trends, and so are a lot of other people.

**THE BUILDER:** Overall, what has the COVID-19 pandemic done to the housing market/housing needs in Rhode Island?

**CLEMENT:** It’s no surprise to say that housing has been a problem in Rhode Island for a long time. We’ve simply been under-producing housing units in our state. What the pandemic has done is put a spotlight on that, and on all the other needs, such as good, safe and affordable housing.

You know that many people were already housing-insecure going into the pandemic. Now, with historic job losses, even more people are at risk of evictions and foreclosures. Unfortunately, the pandemic has made those challenges even more acute.

**THE BUILDER:** What has been the effect on the homeless?

**CLEMENT:** Well, you can’t shelter in place, let alone socially distance, if you’re in a shelter where beds and bunks are not six feet apart, or weren’t when the pandemic started. It’s certainly not secure or safe housing. And you don’t have access to basic services we all just assume will be there, like a place to wash your hands and take a shower, or to take your medications.

All that has had a huge impact on the homeless population, and getting and keeping people housed is now a matter of public health.

**THE BUILDER:** It seems undeniable that people who can afford to are fleeing larger cities for places like Rhode Island. Is HWRI seeing this trend yet? If so, where?

**CLEMENT:** We don’t know yet whether this is a trend or just a something people see as a kind of a temporary solution or reaction.

Certainly the luxury home market in Rhode Island is very

**THE BUILDER:** Do you think that people are shying away from density in the COVID crisis and, more importantly, that local land-use regulators will do the same?

**CLEMENT:** I’m concerned about that. Density is always a bad word for many towns, and many of them continue to resist multifamily development. They always raise concerns about school costs, and now they have public health concerns. But when we talk density in many of the neighborhoods and communities in Rhode Island, we’re talking duplexes and ADUs (affordable dwelling units), not 10-story high rises that don’t make sense or are not supported by local infrastructure.

So, it was an issue before, and COVID could be another argument against denser residential development.

**THE BUILDER:** New-home sales nationally are the highest they have been since 2006. What will this do to affordability in Rhode Island?

**CLEMENT:** It won’t be good. As your readers know, we haven’t been producing enough housing as it is. In addition, our vacancy rates in rental units are at an all-time low. That’s been true for a while. We continue to see a lack of inventory for home sales.

Interestingly, and this is another trend that might or might not be long-term, many seniors already wanted to age-in-place and

see *INTERVIEW...next page*

## **INTERVIEW**...from page 31

age-in-community. But based on the issues and concerns that COVID has brought to nursing homes and congregate-care settings, I think many seniors are like my mother: “Hell, no. I’m not going to any nursing home!”

They want to stay in their houses as long as possible. The good news is that people have the right to choose, but then we need more community-based services to make that realistic. But it also means that a whole bunch of people are over-housed, essentially, and those houses that might become the next wave of starter homes for new households are just not going to be on the market.

So, there’s a lot happening in Rhode Island, where we’ve been underproducing housing for so long that it means a serious lack of inventory.

I’ll give you a sneak peak at the *2020 Housing Fact Book*.\*\* Based on 2019 median single-family home prices – and they have continued to rise in 2020 – households earning the state’s median household income of \$63,296 can only afford to buy a home in one Rhode Island community: Central Falls. That’s down from two communities in last year’s *Fact Book*.

If you have public-health service issues, and concerns around density and COVID risk, Central Falls won’t be a place where many people want to buy.

### **THE BUILDER: What can be done about this?**

**CLEMENT:** Housing bonds are part of the solution, but they’re on hold with the legislature and governor’s office because of the budget issues right now. There could be a special election (for a bond referendum), but I’ve heard no guarantee that there will be. Maybe in the state budget we can finally figure out a way to do a dedicated funding stream.

But there are tools that state and local governments can use. First, though, we need to start ASAP creating a community stabilization fund so that we can keep as many people as possible from running into foreclosures. We’ve been through a foreclosure crisis before, and we don’t want large-scale foreclosures again, with abandoned buildings and properties.

Now, with the eviction moratorium, many small multifamily property owners are being put at great risk. So, we need to stabilize those homeowners and properties, and keep them in local control as much as possible. In fact, there is a national stabilization fund that’s run out of the U.S. Treasury that can be the model. We need to be proactive on that front very quickly. We don’t want to be cleaning up another foreclosure mess for 10-plus years, as we had to do after 2008.

In addition, we have rental-assistance programs that are just too complicated to use, with the current restrictions from the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). We have to figure that out so we can keep people paying their rents so these houses are not being put at risk of foreclosure.

I think there are lots of things that communities can do. We can repurpose and reuse commercial and retail spaces, as that whole sector is changing. This is another trend that existed before COVID, with online shopping and everything else, but obviously the pandemic has greatly quickened the pace.

There are challenges, but there are tools we can use. We just have to have the collective political will to do that.

**THE BUILDER: Are you hearing from local governments that they’re willing to partner with the private sector, and with groups like the Rhode Island Builders Association and HousingWorks, or are they junk hunkering down with established growth policies?**

**CLEMENT:** People are very concerned. We’ve had a number of conversations with local communities, the League of Cities and Towns, and others. They realize, particularly the urban communities, how bad this all is for their local tax rolls if they don’t get a handle on it pretty quickly. So, the urban communities especially are very eager to be on top of this, to figure out how to do eviction- and foreclosure-prevention strategies as quickly as possible.

As you know, the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act has been on the books for over 27 years, and has required all communities to work toward the goal of 10 percent affordable housing stock. But here’s another preview from the *Housing Fact Book*. Only six municipalities out of the 39 have met that goal. There are still many communities that could be even more reluctant to build and develop for all the reasons we talked about earlier.

So, it’s a mixed bag. But communities do understand that wide-scale evictions and foreclosures are bad for their budgets.

**THE BUILDER: Are there any other *Fact Book* previews you can share?**

**CLEMENT:** We’ve talked about the home-ownership issues, but the rental scene is even worse. For an average, two-bedroom bedroom unit, based on 2019 figures – and, as we said, the 2020 numbers are creeping up -- the state’s median renter household income of \$34,255 cannot afford to rent in any Rhode Island city or town. This was true in last year’s *Fact Book* as well. No improvement.

It makes me crazy when I think about the early days of the pandemic, when we were talking about all the essential workers, like home-health aides, nurses, first responders and others. Many of those people, particularly community-based workers and community-health workers, tend to be low-wage workers who can’t afford to rent or buy anywhere in Rhode Island. We know they’re critical workers, but we aren’t giving them the support they need.

That’s an ongoing struggle.

Another issue this public-health crisis has brought to the fore is all the race and ethnicity housing disparities that exist, and we’ve been working on this for a long time in the community development work that we all do. We’ve taken more time to report on these disparities in the *Fact Book* this year.

One thing that stands out in my mind is the gap in homeownership rates between blacks and non-Hispanic whites: It’s larger now than it was in 1934, which is the year of enactment the FHA, the Federal Housing Administration, and the start of the modern housing finance agency. The current homeownership rate for blacks, a national number that’s also true for Rhode Island, is below the 1968 level of 40.9 percent.

So, we have generations of people left out of the greatest way to create wealth: homeownership. Without stability through homeownership and good, safe, stable housing, no wonder there are riots in the streets.

We have a lot of work to do.

see **CLEMENT**...page 34



## TRAINING...from page 30

- Frost-Protected Shallow Foundations
- Marketing and Social Media in a Crisis
- Hiring Best Practices for Builders
- Waterproofing Walls and Roofs
- Residential Energy and Indoor Air Quality
- Residential and Commercial Blueprint Reading
- Residential and Commercial Estimating
- Blower Door and Air Leakage Testing
- Deck Codes and Construction
- Lead-Safe Remodeler/Renovator 8-Hour Initial Training
- Accounting and Cash Flow...and more.

"The CDP is expanding and evolving to reflect what we are hearing from both new contractors and existing RIBA members," commented RIBA Member Services Coordinator Elise Geddes.

"One of the more requested topics for classes and seminars has been building codes. That's of interest to new contractors as well, and they also want more classes to help them establish their businesses, such as cash flow, scheduling, blueprint reading and estimating," Ms. Geddes added.

"We are always looking for feedback from our members, because the topics they are looking for to better their businesses is what new members are sure to be needing and wanting - and that is the purpose of the CDP."

Depending on the course, some are offered on-site and others online. Until the COVID-19 crisis passes, however, all courses are being offered by live teleconference on the Zoom platform.

## Our future workforce

More educated contractors aren't the industry's only need. There is a lack of skilled workers too. To meet the need, RIBA is also expanding its trade training courses through its Workforce Development Program (WDP).


"There has been a tremendous response to our CDP classes for existing contractors and for our trade training programs, both from members who want to expand their skill sets and from new people coming into the industry after job losses in other fields,"

said RIBA Executive Officer John Marcantonio.

The need for improving contractor skills and for bringing new, skilled people into the industry were both reinforced by two leading economists recently, who stressed that, in a down economy, career training and further education for all contractors and their employees are crucial to staying in business and growing that business. See the June *Rhode Island Builder* for full coverage of that issue.

"Long before COVID-19, RIBA was positioning itself to provide these training opportunities," Mr. Marcantonio said. "This is a huge benefit and is driving interest in new membership."

RIBA's WDP prepares new workers for the residential construction industry and upsells current employees in the industry. It's available free of charge to employers and participants in RIBA's extensive system of classes in carpentry, electrical and plumbing. And there are plans to further expand the offerings.

For details on CDP classes and to register, contact Bob Salvas at (401) 438-7400 or [bsalvas@ribuilders.org](mailto:bsalvas@ribuilders.org), or visit [RIBAEducates.org](http://RIBAEducates.org). For information on the WDP or RIBA membership, contact Elise Geddes at (401) 438-7400 or [egeddes@ribuilders.org](mailto:egeddes@ribuilders.org). 

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## SUPPLY ISSUES...from page 16

"If lumber mills are struggling to keep up, [U.S. Commerce] Sec. Wilbur Ross can remove tariffs temporarily to keep lumber prices from skyrocketing," he stated.

NAHB continues working on all fronts to find solutions that will ensure U.S. home builders have access to a stable supply of lumber at reasonable prices to keep housing affordable for hardworking American families.

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## CLEMENT...from page 32

**THE BUILDER:** Please give us something more cheerful to end on!

**CLEMENT:** Yes, I don't mean to be such a Debbie Downer! There are lots of challenges, but what I like to think is that 2020 might finally have given us 20-20 vision, where we're seeing clearly now what really needs to be addressed and fixed.

So, yes, I am hopeful that all these difficulties have created the perfect storm, where everything comes together and everybody says: "We can't ignore this anymore. We can't ignore housing investments, and we can't put off addressing these race and ethnic disparities in our state."

So, I hope we're at a tipping point where we'll we collectively say, "enough."

*The term "Boston Effect" refers to people who visited or went to school in Boston, fell in love with the city, and decided to live there. The term can apply in any desirable area, such as Rhode Island.*

*\*\*The Housing Fact Book is a comprehensive collection of detailed data on Rhode Island's housing picture, down to the city and town level. The 2020 Housing Fact Book was to be released on October 16<sup>th</sup>, several weeks after this interview took place.*

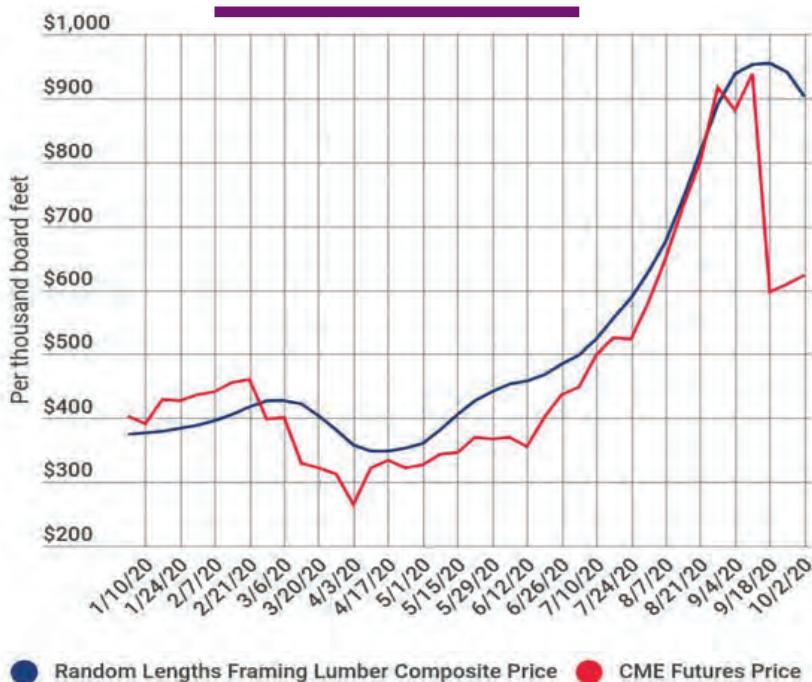
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Lumber Prices as of October 2



SOURCE: National Association of Home Builders

## BOARDS...from page 14

their reaction to testimony."

Do members of the public join the teleconference hearings and express opinions?

"That is happening now. In the beginning, that was difficult for some communities. But there has been a significant increase in people who can log in to comment on a project," she reported. "At first, there would be an occasional person who tried to hijack the meeting, but as the communities mastered the technology, being able to mute people if necessary, all that has improved."

How far behind are communities on applications?

"I don't think any communities are behind right now, other than those that are inundated with development. I've seen chock-full agendas in South County, Lincoln and Providence, where development is very hot right now. I've seen no significant delays, but they are just very busy with development, which is a good thing."

Ms. Rocha suggests that builders and developers get their applications in as early as possible.

"Get all your paperwork in accurately and early," she emphasized. "Before COVID, you could speak to staff before an in-person meeting to see what issues were coming up and have time to address them."

Now, you have to stay in contact and be your own advocate."

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*Joelle Rocha is a partner at Kelly, Souza, Rocha & Parmenter, P.C. Reach her at (401) 490-7334 or jrocha@ksrplaw.com.*



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# Bay State continues Workforce Housing Initiative, urges developers to build

MassHousing has invested more than \$100 million in its Workforce Housing fund, which supports the creation of rental housing that is affordable for households whose incomes are too high for subsidized housing but are priced out by market rents, says the agency, the counterpart to the Ocean State's Rhode Island Housing.

The Workforce Housing Initiative:

- Supports housing with rents affordable to individuals and families with incomes of generally between 60 percent and 120 percent of Area Median Income (AMI).

- Provides up to \$100,000 of subsidy per workforce housing unit.
- Leverages strategic opportunities to use state-owned land.
- Complements, but does not replace, traditional MassHousing development financing.
- Ensures workforce housing units are deed-restricted as affordable.

## Workforce Housing Eligible Projects

MassHousing prefers new units for the Workforce Housing Initiative. Existing projects where unrestricted units become restricted, or preservation of affordability is at risk, also will be considered

At least 20 percent of units must be affordable for households earning at or below 80 percent of AMI.

**Borrowers:** Per MassHousing financing requirements, borrowers must be single-asset, sole-purpose entities. Both for-profit and not-for-profit borrowers are eligible, and will be subject to limited dividend requirements.

**Loan Amount:** Up to \$100,000 per workforce unit, with a per project limit of \$3 million.

Developers should note that MassHousing does not intend to use workforce housing resources to fund units required to meet any existing local or state inclusionary zoning obligation. However, MassHousing does want to incentivize developers to add units above and beyond the minimum inclusionary zoning requirements. Therefore, in certain markets, and subject to the approval, MassHousing will consider adjusting the amount of workforce housing funds allocated to a project to allow for this increase in the total number of workforce housing units.

**Loan Maturity:** 15 - 40 years

**First Mortgage Requirements:** The first mortgage loan for the development will be financed directly by MassHousing or through a lending platform approved by MassHousing.

**Affordability Term:** 15-40 years.

**Annual Rental Increases:** During the term of the workforce restriction, annual rent increases may be implemented for workforce housing units up to the MassHousing rent limits.

**Occupancy Agreement and Tenant Selection Plan:** Owners may use the same lease for workforce housing units as the one used for its market units, with a MassHousing-provided addendum that covers specific MassHousing requirements.

Find complete information on the Workforce Housing Initiative at [masshousing.com/en/developers/workforce-housing](https://masshousing.com/en/developers/workforce-housing).



## Resources for RIBA members who work in Massachusetts

*The Rhode Island Builder* covers Massachusetts news relevant to members of the Rhode Island Builders Association who work in our neighbor to the north and east.

Here are some sources of regulatory information and forms for contractors who work in the Bay State, or who plan to. For education purposes, RIBA has expanded its education programs to include courses required for work in Massachusetts.

Bear in mind that most Massachusetts government services must be done online during the COVID-19 crisis.

**Building Permits:** Massachusetts has a statewide formula for building permits. Application forms may vary a little by municipality, but standard forms and information may be found at the Office of Consumer Affairs & Business Regulation (OCABR) website: [Mass.gov/ocabr](https://mass.gov/ocabr).

**Contractor Registration and Licensing:** Massachusetts has licensing for construction supervisors and registration for home improvement contractors. Find the details at [Mass.gov/topics/building-trades](https://mass.gov/topics/building-trades).

Also find information about trade licensing at this site.

**MassHousing:** Similar to Rhode Island Housing, MassHousing is an independent, quasi-public agency that provides financing for affordable housing in Massachusetts.

Created in 1966, MassHousing raises capital by selling bonds, and lends the proceeds to low- and moderate-income homebuyers and homeowners, and to developers who build or preserve affordable and/or mixed-income rental housing. Since its inception, MassHousing has provided more than \$20 billion for affordable housing. Find out more at [MassHousing.com](https://masshousing.com).



For RIBA  
membership information  
contact Elise Geddes  
401-438-7400  
or [egeddes@ribuilders.org](mailto:egeddes@ribuilders.org)

## INSPECTIONS...from page 2



**Mr. Antonson introduces inspector trainees to the State Building Office/ Dept. of Business Regulation COVID-19 jobsite checklist**

or in break areas or lunchrooms is allowed.

“Residential construction sites are all unique, and each site will require different options for the requirements and regulations to be adhered to,” Mr. Antonson told the trainees. “Check to make sure that the intent to comply is taking place. Please note that, on a visit, not all the trades may be on-site, nor the builder.”

For more information, contact Mr. Antonson at (401) 921-5507 or [steven.antonson@dbr.ri.gov](mailto:steven.antonson@dbr.ri.gov).

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cluding signage posted at all entrances to the jobsite. If there is no actual entrance, signs may be posted on porta johns. Once the permanent structure is built, posters must be displayed at the entrances while work continues. *See the centerspread of this issue for signs.*

- Whether physical distancing measures are in place and enforced. No crowding or mingling at food trucks

## NATIONAL GRID...from page 13

- Energy specialists provided free technical support, custom trades training and project certification services.

**Results and Current State of the Market:** By the end of 2020, the number of Zero Energy homes in planning, design and construction has grown from several single-family homes each year to over 200 housing units of various types, sizes and locations. Most of these buildings will be the design and construction team’s first Zero Energy projects. Homes currently underway in 2020 include:

- Nine-unit DOE ZER townhouse development in Warwick
- Seven-unit Passive House mixed-use building in Providence
- Five single-family Passive House affordable homes in Providence
- Thirty-unit Passive House affordable apartment building in Providence
- Four 24-unit Passive House affordable apartment buildings in East Greenwich
- Fifty-four-unit affordable apartment building in Providence
- Two Passive House tiny homes
- Five single family DOE ZER and or/Passive House homes in South County

**Looking Ahead:** National Grid will continue to provide support for Zero Net Energy homes next year through the Residential New Construction program. To learn more about the Zero Net Energy Program technical services and incentives please call (888) 887-8841.

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- Up to 3 of your own Facebook posts will be shared by the RI Home Show's Facebook page May 2020 - April 2021
- A new exhibitor directory will be developed on RIBAHomeShow.com which will categorize exhibitors by industry and service-type. Each exhibitor will have the opportunity to provide a brief description, as well as social media handles for their directory listing and promote your show specials
- The website floor plan will transition to a new interactive floor plan that will allow users to interact with each exhibitor's booth space and learn more about the services, products and promotions that you will be offering at the show.

**For those exhibitors moving forward to the RI Home Show in 2021, and who want to be a part of the exhibitor social media campaign, please contact Robert Yoffe at 781.639.5200 or email [bob@yoffeexpo.com](mailto:bob@yoffeexpo.com) to secure your participation. Then, visit [ribahomeshow.com/program](http://ribahomeshow.com/program) to fill out the form to begin.**

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