

## FEATURED PRODUCTS AND SERVICES FOR JANUARY

*Middle Section*

### A quiet giant among RIBA members

On the passing of John R. "Jack" Bentz, we offer a tribute to the life and work of a man who was as modest as he was talented, effective and influential.

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### Industry rips doubling of lumber tariffs

Calling it the worst thing to do at a time of housing shortages and supply chain issues, builders condemn the administration's move to double tariffs on Canadian lumber.

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### RIBA Podcast #8 now posted

Revised Rhode Island codes and how building officials are trained are among the subjects. Now posted on iTunes and other podcast platforms.

### RIBA hosts Christmas Open House

Members and guests enjoy the first in-person networking evening at RIBA headquarters in a long time.

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## Code revisions take effect on February 1



**James Cambio and Julietta Georgakis**

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

Larger egress window sizes and some controversial electrical requirements are among the code changes taking effect on February 1<sup>st</sup> for Rhode Island contractors.

On November 18<sup>th</sup>, *The Rhode Island Builder* sat

down with Dept. of Business Regulation Deputy Director Julietta Georgakis and Building Code Commissioner James Cambio to talk about the 2021 Rhode Island Code revisions.

"There weren't that many amendments on this code cycle, but some of the biggest things I think you'd see in the residential code," said Mr. Cambio.

"Of course, energy is always in there, making houses more energy efficient. But one of the biggest changes is going to be the egress section in the emergency escape window sizes, where it'll make it easier to distinguish what's required," he continued.

"Before, we had two different sizes, depending on different conditions, and it caused a lot of confusion. So, we were able to just adopt the (International Code Council) model code, which calls for a 5.7 square-foot clear opening, and it simplifies that whole section."

There will be very few changes to the plumbing,

*see CODES...page 32*

## Statewide wetlands rules' effective date bumped to July

Builders and developers will have to wait a little longer for final statewide wetlands regulations.

That's the word from the Dept. of Environmental Management (DEM), which on November 23<sup>rd</sup> proposed a change in the effective date of the new Rules and Regulations Governing the Administration and Enforcement of the Freshwater Wetlands Act: July 1, 2022.

"We have been in communication with several stakeholders, including RIBA, on the implementation of the new wetlands regulations," Acting DEM Director Terrence Gray told *The Rhode Island Builder*.

"Lots of questions have come up and new information, fact sheets, and guidance will clearly help support a smooth transition to the new system. More time is

needed to draft those documents, review them with outside experts and practitioners, and provide education and training, so we have decided to extend the effective date of the rules to be July 1<sup>st</sup>," Mr. Gray added.

"This gives us time in the spring of 2022 to get these important tasks done. It also has the added benefit of extending the current system to accommodate the applications expected for the 2022 construction season. Extending the effective date of the regulations requires a formal rulemaking process, and that is currently ongoing."

A DEM statement said: "Other than the effective date, the section regarding superseded rules and rule numbering, no other substantive changes are being

*see WETLANDS...page 32*

# President's Message

## Let's begin this new year with new hope!



Carol O'Donnell

It's clear that our entire country, and certainly we in the Rhode Island Builders Association, have had our mettle tested over the past two years.

Between COVID-19 lockdowns, working to keep our businesses going through unprecedented jobsite protocols, doing everything we could to be sure our employees and customers remained safe, we have had our hands full.

It hasn't been easy, and I truly believe that this time of crisis has brought out the best in all of us and shown us our true strength.

While there has been nothing good about

this pandemic, it has shown us what we can do as business people and, especially, when we form a united front through our trade association.

Together, we successfully fought to keep residential construction an essential business. Almost unexpectedly, we faced unprecedented demand for new construction and remodeling, and we continue to meet it.

We kept our vital educational programs and trade training not only going but growing.

We dealt -- and are still dealing with -- labor shortages, building material issues, and supply-chain bottlenecks.

Through it all, by supporting each other and RIBA, and through our dedicated staff, we adapted to the changing demands of the pandemic.

There were some additional byproducts of our efforts. For one thing, we have all pretty much become Zoom experts. And many of us, especially our Board of Directors, have adapted to having meetings out in the fresh air.

We learned and adapted as situations arose. And we did it right.

We even kept our sense of humor.

"Hey, it's 2021! What could go wrong?" I often heard someone say with a smile.

As we prepare to advance together into

2022, we have already brought back our most popular social and networking events. Our 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Clambake returned in August, and attracted a huge crowd. So did our 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Classic that same month.

Now we look forward to our long-awaited 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Rhode Island Home Show in April. If all goes as planned, it will be bigger and better than ever!

Even as normality returns, we should realize that it will do so very slowly. We shouldn't think that the biggest challenges are over. We can certainly pause for a few well-deserved pats on the back, but this is no time to rest.

COVID variants seem to be plentiful, showing no signs of a let-up. In fact, I sometimes wonder when the doctors are going to run out of Greek letters to name them.

So, even as we look forward to progress in 2022, this is no time to let down our guard. We have unknown challenges ahead, and we have the known challenges of our legislative program and tackling the issues faced by the residential construction industry, including the ongoing housing crisis in Rhode Island.

Judging from what we have accomplished over the past two years, however, I have no doubt that our strength and cooperation will bring continued success!

RIBA

### The Rhode Island Builder

Official publication of the  
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since 1951

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### DEADLINE FOR THE FEBRUARY ISSUE

All copy, ads and photos must be to us by

# Friday, December 31

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



## Electrical code revision draws criticism

Several changes to the Rhode Island Electrical Code, which kicks in on February 1<sup>st</sup>, are expensive conveniences and have nothing to do with life safety, at least one member of the Rhode Island Builders Association contends.

The new requirements include exterior emergency shutoffs for electrical main service; ground fault circuit interrupters (GFI's) for all exterior connections, including air conditioner compressors; and whole-house surge protectors.

"I do believe these are not minor changes. These are code issues that are relatively expensive," commented Robert E. DeBlois of DeBlois Building Co., a member of the state Building Code Standards Committee (BCSC) who said that he has objected to the changes.

"First of all, why would you want to give someone the ability to turn the power off from outside your house, especially if you're away in the middle of the winter? It's a burglar's dream come true," he continued.

As for exterior GFI's, 15 states adopted this rule, but seven had repealed it as of last summer because of problems it caused, according to Mr. DeBlois.

"The air conditioner manufacturers haven't kept up with that requirement," he stated.

When it comes to whole-house surge protectors: "I just built a house and installed one of these simply because there was so much expensive equipment. But my electrician told me I was wasting my money because it really wouldn't do anything. These are strictly convenience items that have nothing to do with life safety."

Building Code Commissioner James Cambio had a different opinion.

"None of the experts who reviewed the electrical code, and subsequently presented their recommendations to the full BCSC, would agree that these requirements are expensive and unrelated to life safety," Mr. Cambio said.

"If they did, those sections would not now be in the 2021 code. I'm confident that the BCSC board members use their experience and expertise to carefully balance any increase in cost with the added life safety component that the proposed change would bring, and only make those recommendations that are truly beneficial to Rhode Islanders," he added.

"In any case, the best way for any voice to be heard is during the public comment process, after which the board reviews all the comments received for consideration and votes to either amend or approve as submitted."

*See related story on page 1.*

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

# Construction Loans

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# Looking Ahead

## January 2022

♦ **Ongoing: Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) - Basic Carpentry** - Recruiting continues for ongoing VESL classes. For details, contact Betty Bernal at (401) 500-9146 or [bbernal@ribuilders.org](mailto:bbernal@ribuilders.org), or register online at [RIBuilders.org/vesl-training-program-details](http://RIBuilders.org/vesl-training-program-details).

♦ **Ongoing: Courses Being Offered in Spanish** - *Details on page 27.*

🔧 ♦ **January 5<sup>th</sup>: RIBA Contractor Training - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Advanced Hardwood Flooring. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 22.*

🔧 ♦ **January 6<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Start and Grow Your Construction Business. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 22.*

🔧 ♦ **January 7<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 1 Credit Hour** - Topic is Frost-Protected Shallow Foundations. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 23.*

🔧 ♦ **January 12<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Social Media and Marketing. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 23.*

🔧 ♦ **January 14<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Wall Coverings and Sheathing. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 24.*


🔧 ♦ **January 18<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Blower Door and Air Leakage Testing. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 24.*

🔧 ♦ **January 19<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Residential Estimating. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 24.*

🔧 ♦ **January 21<sup>st</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is





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

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

 Indicates a RIBA-sponsored event.

Foundations and Floor Codes. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 25.*

  **January 24<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2 Credit Hours -** Topic is Site-Built Under Deck Drainage System and Manufactured System Overview. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 25.*

  **January 25<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors -2½ Credit Hours -** Topic is Windows and Doors. Taught in-person at Rhode Island Builders Association headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pkwy. #301, East Providence. *Details on page 26.*

 **January 28<sup>th</sup>: RIBA Contractor Training -** Topic is the New Home Construction Process. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 26.*

## February 2022

**February 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> - International Builders Show** - Orlando, Florida.

Visit [Buildersshow.com](http://Buildersshow.com).

## April 2022

 **April 7<sup>th</sup>-10<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 [home-show@ribuilders.org](mailto:home-show@ribuilders.org). *Details on page 7.*

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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: \$20 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

## New Members

Thomas Farias  
Frank Goulart Jr.  
Alaina Mahoney

Farias Construction  
Goulart Property Management  
A.M. Design and Fabrication LLC

## Renewed Members

Salvatore Compagnone  
Mark Constantine  
Gary D'Ambra  
Gregory Demetrakas  
Robert Eaton  
Craig Hibbad  
Ray Lemoi  
Armando Mourato  
Dana Hagopian  
Tanya Donahue  
William Riggs  
Philip Freshman  
Jeff Vaillancourt  
Manuel Barboza  
Steven Desmarais  
Anthony Gargaro

Allstate Builders  
CallMark Restoration  
D'Ambra Realty  
De-Mal Associates Inc.  
Robert M. Eaton Jr.  
KC Construction Co.  
Lemoi & Sons  
Mourato Remodeling  
Precision Development  
RIKB Design Build  
Riggs & Gallagher Inc.  
Alpha Electrical  
Amity Electric  
M. Barboza & Sons  
S. Desmarais Plumbing  
Greenville Insulation Co.

Robert Gruttadauria  
Donald Collard  
Anthony Corsinetti  
Matthew Foster  
Dave Payette  
Alicia Donadio  
Sergei Miroshnichenko  
Joyce Therrien  
Dennis DiPrete  
DiPrete Engineering Associates Inc.  
Steven Wilkinson  
Stephen Hopkins  
Richard Audette  
Donald Hamel  
Lawrence Casey  
Rick Proulx

Greenwich Insulation  
Hareld Glass Co., Inc  
Hartford Paving Corp.  
Innovative Pools & Spas  
Jutras Woodworking Co.  
Rhode Island Mulch Inc.  
Roofing Doctor  
Builders Insurance Group  
Wilkinson Associates  
E & E Realty  
LA Management Inc.  
Andersen Windows & Doors  
Aqua Science  
J & J Materials

## Applications/Pending Members\*

Daisy Alvarado  
Scott Andrews  
Andrew Bajercius  
Jason Butterworth

Antonio Cruz  
Nicholas Grassey  
Denis Larocque

Ryan MacDonald  
Charles Maule  
Courtney Minor

Derek Moore  
Donovan Reid  
Heriberto Suarez Jimenez

\*Subject to registration with the RICRLB. Company name will be printed once application is approved.

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



*It's going fast!*

## Reserve your exhibit space now!

**WHEN:** Thursday, April 7<sup>th</sup> through Sunday, April 10<sup>th</sup>  
**WHERE:** Rhode Island Convention Center, Providence  
**FOR INFORMATION & TO EXHIBIT:** Contact Bob Yoffe at (800) 963-3395

“We started at the Home show with a 10’ by 10’ exhibit space,” says Linda Bohmbach of Home Healthsmith, which specializes in equipment for residential safety and mobility. “Now we’ve grown to a 20’ by 30’ space!”

The Rhode Island Home Show isn’t the only showcase event that Home Healthsmith uses, but....

“This is the largest show we do, and it’s the best show we do,” Ms. Bohmbach says.

“RIBA works with us to make the most of our space and to keep it in the same location. Today, people remember where the Home Healthsmith exhibit is.”

“Every year, we track what the Home Show brings us in sales. People keep our information and move forward with purchases and rentals.”

RIBA’s biggest event of the year, the Rhode Island Home Show indeed returns with a bang in 2022. Along with hundreds of exhibitors, including many RIBA members, showcasing their products and services to thousands of potential customers, this 70th annual event will feature:

- The “Specialty” Rhode Island Flower Show, arranged by the Rhode Island Federation of Garden Clubs - Talented floral designers from all over New England will celebrate flowers, cultures and colors in a unique and extraordinary fashion.

Home Show visitors will get new and creative ideas to make their homes special.

- During “The Garden Experience,” the crowds will find three amazing features. From the Central Nurseries Garden Experience itself and its nine “Gardens of the World” features to the Outdoor Living Oasis and the ideas that McKay’s Furniture, Arnold Lumber, and Unilock have created, visitors will surely be dazzled!

As an extra experience, this part of the show includes the talents within the Providence Art Club to the resources of the State Council on the Arts.

- The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Energy Expo by National Grid – Visitors will meet experts so they can learn about energy-saving solutions to help reduce energy usage, save money and increase their homes’ comfort with innovative electric and sustainable technologies, while supporting natural resources, clean energy and climate goals.

With two years of pent-up homeowner demand and the desire for home improvement projects at record highs, Home Show crowds are expected to be enormous.

Reserve your exhibit space now, at discounted RIBA member rates, for what’s bound to be an epic event! Even though exhibits have expanded out into the Convention Center concourse, space is still at a premium. But people will want to buy the goods and services you offer. Reserve your space now!





# John B. 'Jack' Bentz, 80, pillar of RIBA, industry for decades

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

John B. "Jack" Bentz, president of Property Advisory Group Inc. (PAG) for 45 years and a long-time pillar of the Rhode Island Builders Association, died on November 22<sup>nd</sup>. He was 80.

A Providence native, Jack served in the U.S. Air Force, attended Roger Williams College to study finance and accounting, and worked for Electric Boat. He became a master electrician, eventually working his way to the presidency of PAG.

Jack was as quiet and gentlemanly a man as you would ever meet. But that didn't mean he wasn't tenacious and determined in business – or with causes he believed are important for Rhode Island and America.

In RIBA, he never sought a leadership position or notoriety. Instead, he worked behind the scenes, especially when it came to government affairs and workforce development. He was a major force behind RIBA's workforce training programs, now a national model, and his face was familiar to every major politician in city and state government.

Jack was a prominent advocate for affordable housing, one of PAG's primary areas of development, not only in Rhode Island but as far west as Phoenix, Arizona, and as far south as Delaware.

Jack and business associates Robert Gaudreau and Gretchen Maurer worked together for nearly 40 years.

"We got together in 1978, and over the years we found a great need for affordable housing. We're doing our part: Affordable housing is sorely needed, and there's not enough of it," Jack once told *The Rhode Island Builder*.

As if PAG and his other business and civic activities didn't keep him busy enough, Jack was president of the National Leased Housing Association, a Washington-based advocacy group representing the affordable multifamily housing industry. He was a past president of both the Institute of Real Estate Management



***A major force not only for affordable housing but for workforce development as well, here's Mr. Bentz, center, on a visit to the Worcester Technical High School in 2014. With him are RIBA's Bob Baldwin and then-Rhode Island Commissioner of Education Deborah Gist.***

(IREM) in Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Apartment Association. Jack also served as treasurer of the Rhode Island Health and Educational Building Corp. (RIHEBC) which, during his tenure, issued over \$500 million in municipal bonds for non-profit healthcare and educational institutions, including the Providence Career

and Technical Academy.

Jack was also active in the Greater Providence Youth Hockey Association and held a private pilot's license.

Joining RIBA in 1993, Jack served on the Board of Directors for many years.

"In RIBA, you really know you're part of something that's helping the community and training kids," he once said.

RIBA Executive Officer John Marcantonio commented: "Jack was an amazing person and a great friend to the industry. So few know how much he helped so many," Mr. Marcantonio said.

"As someone who knows how much Jack did, how dedicated a person he was, how many lives he changed, I just want to say that, with his passing, we've lost a true leader, friend and pillar of the industry."

Past RIBA President Edgar N. Ladoucer spoke for us all.

"Jack was a dear friend to me and so many others. Jack was truly a leader and mentor in our industry. We will all miss him."

A son of the late Charles and Rita (Nelson) Bentz, Jack leaves his wife, Linda M. (Tougas) Bentz. They moved from Providence to Greenville 25 years ago. He also leaves daughter Christine A. Robb and her husband, William, of Millbrook, New York; son Jonathan M. Bentz and his wife, Amy, of Denver, Colorado, and daughter Jill A. Cardarella and her husband, James, of Towson, Maryland.

Jack was the stepfather of Kimberly A. Perogino of Cranston and Nicholas W. Sevigny of Johnston. He was the brother of Charles Bentz of Providence. He is also survived by 12 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

In Jack's memory, donations can be made to the American Cancer Society, Rhode Island Chapter, 931 Jefferson Blvd., Suite 3004, Warwick, RI 02886 or Hope-Health Hospice and Palliative Care, 1085 North Main St., Providence, RI 02904.

For Online Condolences, visit Tucker-QuinnFuneralChapel.com.

# McKee pledges \$31 million for affordable housing in R.I.

Twenty-three affordable housing developments in 13 cities and towns will benefit from \$31 million in awards through the Building Homes Rhode Island (BHRI) program, Gov. Daniel J. McKee announced on December 1<sup>st</sup>.

The awards are intended to produce or preserve more than 600 units of affordable housing, a statement from the governor's office said. They constitute the largest round of awards made through the BHRI program since its inception in 2006.

"Addressing the housing crisis in Rhode Island is one of the top priorities of the McKee-Matos Administration," said Gov. McKee. "These awards represent historic funding to tackle our housing crisis and keep Rhode Islanders in safe, affordable and stable housing."

BHRI is a state-funded initiative of the Housing Resources Commission intended to create and preserve rental units for those making up to 80 percent area median income (AMI); and homeownership projects for those who make up to 120 percent (AMI). Projects are funded by \$50 million from the housing and community revitalization bond approved by voters in March.

## Projects supported by these funds include:

- Armory Revival's Bourne Mill III project in Tiverton: \$2,029,479 to produce 59 affordable and workforce housing units. Project involves new construction of a net-zero development and is designed for passive house certification.

- Church Community Housing, Fifty Washington Square in Newport: \$800,000 to update and rehab 93 apartments, all of which are affordable.

- Church Community Housing, Cottrell Farms in Tiverton: \$355,086 to build 3 new two-bedroom, net zero energy homes.

- Church Community Housing, 12 & 15 Bloom Court in Middletown: \$184,179 to build 2 new single-family, net zero energy homeownership units to replace two blighted and structurally unsound houses that will be demolished.

- Crossroads RI, 165 Beach in Warwick: \$448,529 to convert the former homeless shelter rooms located on the first floor into four units of permanent supportive housing for formerly homeless families.

- Neighborworks Blackstone River Valley, The Millrace in Woonsocket: \$1,270,169 to produce 70 units of affordable and workforce housing.

- Neighborworks Blackstone River Valley, Constitution Hill II & III in Woonsocket: \$976,650 to update and preserve 65 affordable apartments in the Constitution Hill neighborhood of Woonsocket.

- Neighborworks Blackstone River Valley, Fernwood IV in Burrillville: \$265,000 to construct eight new homes on vacant land.

- One Neighborhood Builders, Residences at Riverside in East Providence: \$1,676,000 to create 16 new affordable rental units, including 3 to be reserved for youth aging out of foster care.

- SWAP, Portland Homes in Providence: \$839,915 to construct 4 homeownership units each with a rental unit on vacant lots.

- One Neighborhood Builders, Villas Above the River in Providence: \$3,455,000 to produce and preserve 85 units of affordable and workforce housing.

- Looking Upwards / SWAP, Looking Upwards in Jamestown: \$1,800,000 to create 12 affordable apartments for use by individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities

- Brisa Ventures, Bernon Mills Residence in Woonsocket: \$4,000,000 to rehabilitate a blighted historic mill property to include three multifamily apartment buildings, for a total of 60 affordable units.

- Coventry Housing Associates, Riverside Landing in Coventry: \$2,713,357 to renovate two historic dilapidated buildings to create eight new affordable units.

- Marathon Development, Copley Chambers in Providence: \$1,950,000 to convert a vacant historic building into a mixed-use property including a total of 26 affordable units.



Gov. Daniel J. McKee

- Dakota Partners, Brookside Terrace II in East Greenwich: \$402,000 to produce 48 new affordable rental units.

- South County Habitat for Humanity, Cardinal Ln. in Hopkinton: \$336,204 to build three single-family affordable homeownership units on a vacant piece of land.

- Neighborworks Blackstone River Valley, Ivy Place in East Providence: \$578,397 to develop 13 affordable homeownership units on a vacant infill lot.

- Crossroads, RI, Summer St. I in Providence: \$2,000,000 to produce 87 units reserved for homeless individuals at or below 30% of AMI.

- Crossroads RI, Summer St. II in Providence: \$2,000,000 to produce 89 units reserved for homeless individuals at or below 30% of AMI.

- Smith Hill CDC for 171 & 175 Admiral Street in Providence: \$280,748 to provide 2 affordable homeownership opportunities in the Smith Hill neighborhood.

- South County Habitat for Humanity, Mooresfield in Charlestown: \$88,000 to construct a single-family affordable homeownership unit on a vacant gifted lot.

- Housing Authority of the City of Newport, Park Holm IV in Newport: \$2,550,000 to preserve 51 affordable units.

# NAHB: Doubling lumber tariffs a gut punch for American home buyers

## *National Association of Home Builders*

"With the nation in the midst of a housing affordability crisis, the Biden Administration has moved to slap a huge, unwanted tax hike on American home buyers and renters by doubling the tariffs on Canadian lumber shipments into the U.S. This is the worst time to add needless housing costs onto the backs of hard-working American families."

That was the word from Chuck Fowke, chairman of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and a custom home builder from Tampa, Fla., on November 24<sup>th</sup> after the U.S. Dept. of Commerce moved forward with an administrative review to double the tariffs on Canadian lumber shipments into the U.S. from 9 percent to 17.9 percent.

Meanwhile, Sens. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) and Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), the chairman and ranking member, respectively, of the Senate Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies, recently sent a letter to Commerce Sec. Gina Raimondo opposing the department's action to double tariffs.

"With the nation in the midst of a housing affordability crisis, this is exactly the wrong time to add needless housing costs onto the backs of hardworking American families," the lawmakers said in the joint letter.

NAHB continues to urge the Biden administration to suspend tariffs on Canadian lumber and move immediately to engage with Canada on a long-term trade agreement that will ensure a stable supply of lumber to U.S. consumers at reasonable prices.

The association also is calling on members of Congress to urge the administration to take immediate action in this area.

The two senators stressed that historically high lumber and building material prices continue to serve as headwinds to the U.S. housing sector, and while housing has been a bright spot for the U.S. economy, "there is mounting evidence the dramatic increase in

the cost of materials is unfortunately putting this success at risk."

Mr. Fowke commented further: "Home builders are grappling with lumber and other building material supply chain bottlenecks that are raising construction costs. And consumers are dealing with rising inflation that is pushing mortgage interest rates higher," Mr. Fowke said.

"This decision undermines the historic funding commitment made to housing in the Build Back Better legislation and erodes efforts by Commerce Sec. Gina Raimondo and other Biden administration officials to tackle the lumber and building materials

supply issues plaguing the industry," he added.

"Doubling the tariffs will only exacerbate market volatility, put upward pressure on lumber prices and make housing more expensive.

"Rather than placating China and Europe with sweetheart trade deals, the White House needs to change course and move immediately to engage with our Canadian partners on a long-term solution to the trade dispute that will end tariffs and help restore price stability to the lumber market."

Find out more about this and other issues at [NAHB.org](https://www.nahb.org).



## Record number of builders report shortages of labor, subcontractors

### *National Association of Home Builders*

Labor shortages, as reported by single-family builders and remodelers in the latest surveys by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), have hit unprecedented highs since each of the surveys began. The shortages continue to exacerbate housing affordability issues, along with lot shortages and heightened material costs.

According to the October 2021 survey for the NAHB/Well Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI), more than 55 percent of single-family builders reported a shortage of labor across 16 home-building trades, with the greatest shortage noted among carpentry trades (rough, finished and framing crews). The third quarter 2021 NAHB/Royal Building Products Remodeling Market Index (RMI) survey provided similar results across each of the same 16 trades, including a heightened challenge for rough and finished carpentry.

### *Subs in short supply*

The same surveys indicate that subcontractor shortages are even more widespread than shortages of labor employed directly by general contractors. At least 90 percent of single-family builders reported a shortage of subcontractors in each of the three categories of carpenters, and 80 percent to 85 percent reported a shortage of subcontractors in six other trades.

Meanwhile, at least 90 percent of remodelers reported a shortage of subcontractors among carpenters, as well as concrete workers. Overall, more than 80 percent of remodelers reported a shortage of subcontractors in 11 of the 16 trades.

Among remodelers, shortages across those trades increased from 23 percent to 66 percent for direct employees and from 25 percent to 65 percent for subcontractors during 2013 to 2017, before spiking again to 76 percent and 81 percent, respectively, in the latest survey.

Among single-family builders, the record 76 percent of shortages reported in October

see *LABOR...page 32*

[www.ribuilders.org](https://www.ribuilders.org)



## Member News: Christmas Open House



► **It's Santa!** The 'jolly old elf' made a personal appearance at the Rhode Island Builders Association headquarters on December 6<sup>th</sup> during RIBA's Christmas Open House. With him are, from left, RIBA Operations Manager Robin Barlow, President Carol O'Donnell, and Professional Women in Building Council President Linda Bohmbach.



► **Gathering around the Christmas tree** are Steve Fitzgerald, Bill Parmentier, Martin Misenhimer and Ken Jones.



◄ **It's the merry folks from Pella Windows & Doors!**



◄ **Maria Fratiello from National Building Products cozies up to Santa Claus.**

► **Enjoying some networking and holiday conversation** are, from left, Tony Freitas, and Craig and Cheryl Custer.



▲ **Art Dwyer from Wood's Heating Service, at left, meets up with RIBA leadership past and present:** Immediate Past President Tim Stasiunas, President Carol O'Donnell, and Past President Roland Fiore, a former basketball player at the University of Rhode Island. Who would know?





# BIG NEWS



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Lowe

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Winter has arrived! Is your insurance set?

New England winter weather is here. This means you may wish to double-check your current insurance policy and make sure you have proper property and liability coverage; recreational “toy in-

## Winter is a good time to review your insurance coverage

surance” for that snowmobile or ATV; and auto insurance because cars are especially susceptible to damage during the winter.

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

## *Professional Women in Building: PWB NEWS*

***Thank you to all our members and guests who joined us for our  
first in-person event!***

***We want to wish you a Happy and Healthy New Year!***



### ***PWB Officers***

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

### **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>



## Member Profile: Robert E. DeBlois III of BeBlois Building Co.

# Working with Dad and loving it!

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

For Robert E. “Beau” DeBlois III, the journey has taken him from pushing a broom and cleaning windows to the vice presidency of DeBlois Building Co. in some not-so-easy steps.

“My dad believes in hard work, and I started out as a kid with a broom in my hand at jobsites, when I was 9 or 10 years old,” Beau remembers. “He gave me the incentive to work hard. If I wanted a TV for my room, I had to earn the money for it. But I was fascinated by construction, and I loved watching the crew work and operate the heavy equipment.”

“Dad” is none other than Robert E. “Bob” DeBlois Jr., a member of the Rhode Island Building Code Standards Committee for many years, and a longtime member of the Rhode Island Builders Association’s Board of Directors. Bob founded DeBlois Building Co. in 1983.

As Beau got into high school at Bishop Hendricken, where he played varsity hockey and varsity lacrosse, and at the Hotchkiss School in Connecticut, he started taking on tougher work at jobsites on weekends and during vacations. Dad paid him \$10 an hour. Not bad for a kid.

After college at Suffolk University, where he studied business management, Beau returned to DeBlois Building Co. Then, about a year ago, Bob and Beau became partners, with Beau as vice president.

“My dad knows that I’m a hard worker, and we have always enjoyed working together,” Beau comments.

A major builder of neighborhood developments, you can see DeBlois handiwork all over central and southern Rhode Island. Subdivisions include The Oaks, Fairview Commons and Hill Street Farms in Coventry; Polo Woods, Doc Horse Estates and



Beau DeBlois, right, and his dad show off their “The Oaks” development in Coventry

Hideaway Farm in North Kingstown; Toll Gate Commons, Rose Garden and Tidewater in Warwick, and many others.

“When we’re doing a subdivision, we offer eight or 10 different models of homes at any given time, and the buyers can pick the style they like, and we build it for them, along with their choice of countertops, carpet, paint colors, etc.” Beau explains.

“When it comes to designing these homes, we’ve felt that the housing inventory in Rhode Island has become a little stale. So, we make the exteriors of the houses very attractive, and offer pretty

much all fresh floor plans.”

Despite overregulation and brutal impact fees in some towns, Beau says the DeBlois Building Co. tries to keep prices reasonable.

The Oaks in Coventry is a typical example.

“It’s not an over-55 community like so many developments today,” said Beau when *The Rhode Island Builder* visited the development in 2018. “It’s a traditional family neighborhood. We’re loaded with kids! In fact, there have been at least a dozen births here so far.”

The Oaks has been attracting families since the first home sale in 2014. Prices in 2018 started at \$363,900.

While expansion is in the cards, DeBlois Building Co. pretty much sticks to Rhode Island for now, according to Beau. At the moment, Bob and Beau are busy guys. They’re finishing up a 17-unit development in Coventry, with another 33-unit development starting just up the road. They’re working on approvals for 32 more units, which should be good to go in early 2022.

While Bob and Beau were the first in their family to embrace residential construction, Beau’s grandfather, Robert I, was into home heating.

In fact, those ubiquitous DeBlois Oil® trucks you see on the roads? Guess who founded that. And DB Mart convenience stores? That was grandpa too.

DeBlois Building Co. was based on Airport Road in Warwick for many years, but moved to Scrabbletown Road in North Kingstown about a year ago.

DeBlois Building Co. joined RIBA in 1986. And Beau says that members can expect to see a lot more of him at association events in the coming years.

“My dad has been an active member for a long, long time. I’ve seen the value of that, and I plan to follow his example. I’m certainly going to stay local and stay in Rhode Island, so RIBA will continue to be a great resource for us.”

### ***DeBlois Building Co.***

***Vice President/Partner: Robert E. DeBlois III***

***RIBA member since: 1986***

***Focus: Residential Subdivisions***

***Serves: Rhode Island***

***Founded: 1983***

***Based: North Kingstown, Rhode Island***



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# nationalgrid UPDATE

with Laura Rodormer



National Grid offers no-cost services and incentives to help renovate or build an energy-efficient home with lower operating costs, and increased durability and comfort. Working in partnership with builders and/or owners, the Residential New Construction (RNC) Program offers energy modeling, design assistance and in-field inspections to help customers achieve energy efficient homes.

In addition to technical support, RNC offers financial incentives to help offset incremental costs for a higher efficiency home.

## *The Program Serves*

- New construction, gut rehabs, major renovations and additions
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- Market-rate and affordable housing

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see *NATIONAL GRID*...page 33

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# Featured Products & Services for January 2022

**A Rhode Island Builder Magazine Special Section**





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**www.finetco.net • Page 18**

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**Reminder:** The Contractors' Registration and Licensing Board (CRLB) requires 2.5 continuing education credits every year to renew your Rhode Island registration. The Rhode Island Builders Association (state approved provider code #1) offers all the courses you need to fulfill these requirements. Check out this month's offerings on these pages, or at [RIBuilders.org](http://RIBuilders.org) and [RIBAEducates.com](http://RIBAEducates.com). RIBA makes it simple for you to earn your credits quickly and easily. Have questions? Want to become a member? Give us a call at (401) 438-7400. And remember, courses are always free for RIBA members and their employees.

## Continuing Education

*Courses headlined in **RED** on The RIBA Contractor Training Pages qualify for continuing education requirements. **EVERY RESIDENTIAL CONTRACTOR** registered to work in Rhode Island must fulfill continuing education requirements before his or her next renewal date, as stated above, and must provide class certificates as evidence of completion.*

2½ Credit Hours:

### **Advanced Hardwood Flooring** *January 5<sup>th</sup>*

**WHEN:** Wednesday, January 5<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](mailto:bsalvas@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400.

Join instructor Ryan Baker to learn about how to utilize advancements in hardwood flooring and related products to increase both profitability and customer satisfaction.

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.



2½ Credit Hours:

### **Start and Grow Your Construction Business** *January 6<sup>th</sup>*

**WHEN:** Thursday, January 6<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](mailto: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 anyone who doesn't have a lot of business experience.

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.



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1 Credit Hour:  
***Frost-Protected  
Shallow Foundations***  
*January 7<sup>th</sup>*

**WHEN:** Friday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 8 to 9 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.

FPSFs are a code-permitted way to design and build foundations that are only 12 inches below grade. FPSFs are more cost-effective than conventional frost-depth foundations, and can be used on challenging lots or where regular basement foundations aren't practical and for walk-out basements.

They can also be used in combination with regular foundations. Examine the thermal principles and learn how to design and install an FPSF.

Mike Guertin is the instructor.

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.



2½ Credit Hours:  
***Social Media  
and Digital Marketing***  
*January 12<sup>th</sup>*

**WHEN:** Wednesday, January 12<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.

Join instructor David Englund for this course, which will provide guidance on how to use social media platforms to grow your construction business.

You must pre-register for this class. There will be no admittance to the Zoom session without pre-registration. 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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2½ Credit Hours:  
*Wall Coverings  
and Sheathing*  
January 14<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Friday, January 14<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.

Taught by Larry Desormier, this course covers Chapter 7 of the Rhode Island One and Two Family Dwelling Code with an up-close look into the codes that specifically cover wall coverings and sheathing.

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.





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2½ Credit Hours:  
*Blower Door  
and Air Leakage Testing*  
January 18<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Tuesday, January 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.

Rhode Island's building code requires all new homes be tested for air leakage (blower door test). Learn when the test can be done, how it's done, how to prepare for it, and what the test result means. See where your time is best spent air sealing a house during construction; and the best sealing approach for each location.

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.



2½ Credit Hours:  
*Residential Estimating*  
January 19<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Wednesday, January 19<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.

Taught by instructor Carlos Lora, this course covers basic construction math and how it is used to estimate the labor and material costs of a residential construction project.

Knowledge of blueprint reading is advised.

You must pre-register for this class. There will be no admittance to the Zoom session without pre-registration.

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.



2½ Credit Hours:  
*Foundations  
and Floor Codes*  
*January 21<sup>st</sup>*

**WHEN:** Friday, January 21<sup>st</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.

Join instructor Larry Desormier for detailed look into Chapters 4 and 5 of the Rhode Island One and Two Family Dwelling Code for foundations and floor construction.

You must pre-register for this class. There will be no admittance to the Zoom session without pre-registration.

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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2 Credit Hours:  
*Site-Built Drainage System  
and Manufactured System*  
*Overview*  
*January 24<sup>th</sup>*

**WHEN:** Monday, January 24<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.

EPDM membrane is a cost-effective alternative to proprietary systems to drain water under the decking and provide a dry space beneath the deck.

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Mike Guertin is the instructor.

You must pre-register for this class. There will be no admittance to the Zoom session without pre-registration. 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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## RIBA Contractor Training

### 2½ Credit Hours: *Windows and Doors* *January 25<sup>th</sup>*

**WHEN:** Tuesday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, 8 to 10:30 a.m.

**WHERE:** This is an in-person class at Rhode Island Builders Association headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pky #301, East Providence 02914

**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 Don Hamel to learn about the basic design of residential window and door installations.

You must pre-register for this class. There will be no admittance to the Zoom session without pre-registration. 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.



### *The New Home Construction Process* *January 28<sup>th</sup>*

**WHEN:** Friday, January 28<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.

Taught by Elise Geddes, this class will teach you the steps you will need to keep in mind before you build a new home for speculation or for contract.

You must pre-register for this class.

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.



*IN-PERSON classes will be limited in size and will take place at RIBA Headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pkwy Bldg 3, East Providence RI 02914. All up to date COVID-19 protocols will be followed.  
For more information, contact Bob Salvas, bsalvas@ribuilders.org or call (401) 438-7400.*



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# RIBA offering numerous courses in Spanish in 2022

## January Classes:

The Rhode Island Builders Association is offering a number of courses in Spanish in 2022. Here are the January classes.

### **Introduction**

RIBA ¡Continúa ofreciendo una variedad de ofertas educativas para miembros y empleados! Además, todos los contratistas residenciales de RI son elegibles para tomar las clases a continuación de forma GRATUITA, sujeto a la inscripción en el Programa de Desarrollo de Contratistas.

**19 de enero | 6 pm-8:30pm Estimación residencial -2½ horas crédito** - Impartido por Luis Rivera

Este curso cubre las matemáticas básicas de la construcción y cómo se usa para estimar los costos de mano de obra y materiales de un proyecto de construcción residencial. Se recomienda tener conocimientos de lectura de planos.

**21 de enero | 6pm-8:30pm Códigos de Cimientos y Pisos 2½ horas crédito** - Impartido por Manuel Pegero Una mirada detallada a los Capítulos 4 y 5 del Código de Vivienda para Una y Dos Familias de Rhode Island para cimientos y construcción de pisos.

**24 de enero | 6pm-8:30m Descripción General de Sistemas de Drenaje y Plataformas y su fabricación 2 horas crédito** - Impartido por Manuel Pegero.

**25 de enero | 8 am-10:30 am Fotografía para Tu Negocio de Construcción** - Impartido por John Fell

Aprenda a utilizar mejor la fotografía para mejorar y hacer crecer su negocio de construcción.

**28 y 29 de enero | 9am-4:30pm (ambos días) Capacitación OSHA 10 - No hay horas de crédito de Rhode Island**, pero se emite la tarjeta OSHA 10. Impartido por Hector Moreno. El curso de 10 horas del Programa de Capacitación de Alcance de la Administración de Salud y Seguridad Ocupacional de Asprey (OSHA) cubre los peligros generales de seguridad y salud para los trabajadores principiantes.

**30 de enero | 8am-5pm Certificación RRP de plomo de 8 horas** Impartida por Hector Moreno (EN PERSONA)

Este curso cubre los requisitos de RRP para obtener la certificación como Renovador de plomo en RI y en la EPA. Se realiza un examen escrito al final del curso.

Para registrarse o para obtener más información, comuníquese con Margarita Robledo por correo electrónico a [mrobledo@ribuilders.org](mailto:mrobledo@ribuilders.org) o llamando a la Asociación de Constructores de Rhode Island al (401) 438-7400.

For information about all courses in English (previous pages) contact Bob Salvas for courses offerings taught in English at (401) 500-9146.



## Immigrant workers critical to residential construction

As the residential construction industry continues its momentum in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's no secret that labor shortages have become a problem.

Research by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) shows that immigrants have been an important source of new recruits to the construction industry.

The immigrant labor flow has been highly variable, adjusting quickly to the changing economic environment and moving in sync with the single-family construction business cycle.

NAHB analysis shows that while foreign-born workers represent a substantial component of the U.S. construction labor

force, accounting for almost 23 percent, their share is even higher in the construction trades, reaching 28 percent.

Concentration of immigrants is particularly high in some of the trades needed to build a home, like carpenters, painters, drywall/ceiling tile installers, brick masons, and construction laborers – trades that require less formal education but consistently register some of the highest labor shortages in the NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI) surveys and NAHB Remodeling Market Index (RMI).

In some states, reliance on foreign-born labor is even more pronounced. Immigrants comprise close to 41 percent of the con-

struction workforce in California and close to 40 percent in Texas.

In New York, 35 percent of the construction labor force are foreign-born and in Nevada, one in three construction industry workers come from abroad.

NAHB's analysis is based on the American Community Survey (ACS) data.

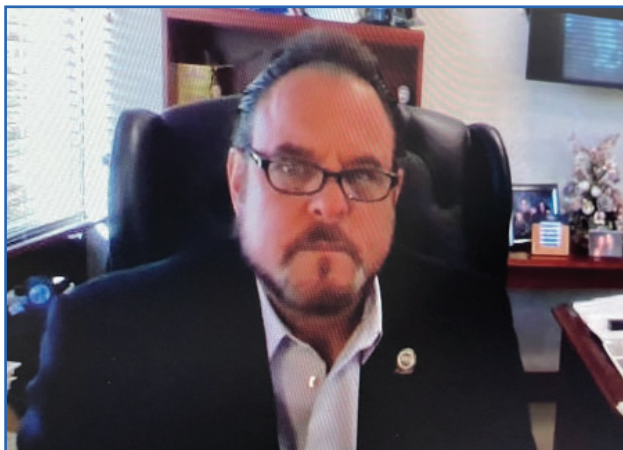




# Michael F. Sabitoni

President, Rhode Island Building and Construction Trades Council

*Michael F. Sabitoni is a second-generation laborer who began his career with the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA), joining Rhode Island's Construction and General Laborers' Local Union 271 in 1988. Mr. Sabitoni worked his way up to become a general foreman and steward while attending the Community College of Rhode Island and Bryant University at night. In 1998, he joined the Laborers' New England Region Organizing Fund, working on grassroots organizing campaigns throughout the region. Two years later, Mr. Sabitoni became a construction marketing representative for the LIUNA National LECET Fund, where he tracked construction projects in the Northeast and solicited union contractors to bid on new projects. He became Local 271's field representative in 2003, becoming business manager in 2005 and again in 2007. Also in 2007, Mr. Sabitoni was elected to his current post with the Building Trades Council. He and his family live in Johnston.*



stream of work and a steady stream of predictable funding to supply that work. These will be great business opportunities for the contractors that employ my members.

So, it's a very exciting time, and it's long overdue. I don't need to tell anybody that we've neglected and deferred our infrastructure investments and needs for a long time, not only in Rhode Island but across this country.

**THE BUILDER:** The need to maintain, update and expand drinking water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure, and general environmental needs, are substantial in Rhode Island. What are the union trades' position on these issues?

**SABITONI:** We wholeheartedly support finding solutions to these problems. The men and women I represent put pipes in the ground, no matter what they're carrying. Drinking water, wastewater, treatment plants, heating fuel – that infrastructure is all handled by the men and women we represent.

There have been many news stories recently about rising sea levels, and the need to relocate residents away from floodplains. As for drinking water, I have a meeting this afternoon with a coalition of folks, both environmental and from the trades, as well as the AFL-CIO, about replacing the many miles of lead pipe that are still in the ground.

There's a lot of work to be done. We've deferred these investments for so long, and we have to get it done. It will have positive quality-of-life impacts on all Rhode Islanders. We're poised and ready to do the work.

**THE BUILDER:** Workforce development for all the trades is still a major issue across all industry sectors. RIBA is expanding its trade training. What is organized labor doing to increase interest in the trades? And what can be done as an industry overall to attract new workers to these careers?

**SABITONI:** There's been a little bit of a sea change in that learning a trade is no longer the last option for students. If anything, I think the trades are right up there with college now. The industry trains you. You have no college debt. You learn a skill that's transferable anywhere in the world. Once you learn a trade, become proficient, become a journeyman, you can make a living for the rest of your life.

To recruit and train, we have a program called Building Futures that's been in place since 2007, and that's the pre-apprenticeship

**THE BUILDER:** With federal investments in infrastructure on the way, what beneficial impacts do you expect for the construction industry in Rhode Island?

**SABITONI:** I've been in the construction industry for 35 years now, both in the field and in the office. In my career, I've never seen the opportunities that will be afforded men and women in the construction trades that we'll see in the next decade or two.

Frankly, that's because there will be actual, predictable streams of funding for multiple infrastructure needs. That hasn't happened in a lifetime. They say some things are "once in a lifetime." With this, they aren't kidding.

When I first started, whether I was out working in the field and out on campaigns, and when I got into leadership, the state would have to go every couple of years and have bond issues for projects. We would take out the credit card, so to speak. Often there were federal matching funds for road and bridge programs, but over the course of time we were up to our eyeballs in debt as a state.

At one point, we were paying \$70 or \$80 million in debt service before we even put a shovel in the ground. We fixed that a few years ago during the Raimondo administration. I give credit to the Chafee Administration as well. But the opportunities we'll see with the new federal infrastructure funds...as I say, once in a lifetime.

When you combine that with what the state has done with the school bonds and the programs that we already have, I see the construction industry for the very long term having a steady

see *INTERVIEW...next page*

## INTERVIEW...from previous page

program for the building trades. The New England Laborers have the Construction and Career Academy in Cranston, a charter school for young men and women to get into the construction mindset in high school and take that track, and they can enter the laborers apprenticeship program.

We've just recently implemented the National Building Trades Multi-Craft Core Curriculum in five career and technical programs, the one at the Providence Career and Technical Academy being the most notable. That program helps 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders become aware of the career opportunities. So, we have the educational infrastructure in place.

The unionized construction industry across this country has spent a lot of money on training for decades. That started because, if you were a contractor, you couldn't rely on the government or private entities to train the workforce you needed on the spot. That's why we started our own multi-employer, joint apprenticeship training committees, electrician and plumber programs, programs for laborers, carpenters, cement finishers and many more.

In some instances, these programs have been in place for over 100 years, so that people could become proficient and learn that trade.

So, today, we have the training infrastructure in place to gear up. And, again, recruitment is going to be an issue going forward, not just for the construction industry but every industry.

That's because there are fewer young men and women coming in from various industries, and it's becoming very competitive to attract them.

The good thing is that we have the capability to gear up, and we have some of the best facilities here in Rhode Island and in surrounding areas.

My own organization has two training centers that do training on a regional scale -- one in Pomfret, Connecticut, and one in Hopkinton, Massachusetts. They're about 50 minutes from Providence. I've got a satellite training facility at the charter school here in Rhode Island, and we just completed a \$25 million renovation/expansion in Pomfret. We're doing a \$50 million expansion/renovation in Hopkinton.

I'd put these on a par with college campuses: dormitories, dining facilities, recreational facilities and, obviously, the training facilities.

In Rhode Island, between IBEW and the UA 51 Plumbers and Pipefitters, the ironworkers, the carpenters.... If you ever get a chance to take a look at the training facilities, they're the best of the best. We pay a considerable amount of money to upgrade them, and also to provide the faculty who staff them.

All our instructors are certified, obviously, so that when someone gets a journey card and gets, say, a master electrician's license, our industry knows exactly what classes they took and what they passed, just as if they were in a traditional, four-year college or beyond.

So, yes, we're poised and ready. We can train. We can scale up. We can increase our capacity at any time. But we have to cast a wider net to get the people we want to attract.

**THE BUILDER:** What resources may be available to smaller residential builders from union-based labor? Many, including the carpenters, have residential programs and rates. Can you elaborate?

**SABITONI:** I have a residential rate right now, and I've had residential programs that we do with our existing employers. We don't do a lot of it, especially not the smaller residential projects. When we do, it's larger projects, mostly in the urban core.

Most of my affiliates in the building trades have residential rates, as they do commercial rates. The carpenters, laborers, plumbers, pipefitters, electricians all do. It's different rates depending on the type of construction. For more technical construction and more difficult environments, there are different rates that apply to that.

We don't do single-family homes or smaller developments, but we do the larger-scale and more complex residential projects. That's where you would see our presence.

**THE BUILDER:** Union trades in Rhode Island have been very supportive of improvements re: larger industry issues, such as permitting, inspections, the overall reduction of regulations, and better land use. Are the trades still supportive of continued reforms to make these processes easier and quicker?

**SABITONI:** Permitting, yes. Making it easier to do business, yes. I have a saying after having worked in this industry for such a long time: "Nothing stops a construction project quicker than a piece of paper -- or waiting for a piece of paper."

So, reasonable regulatory reform -- absolutely. When it comes to any reduction or easing up on any type of quality safety regulations, however, we're absolutely opposed to that.

Our industry is very competitive, and it's very heavily regulated. What slows down construction is mostly the red tape. Obviously, we'd like to see an expedited and predictable process to move projects through those pipelines. But you have to be careful not to hinder the safety aspect of our work.

**THE BUILDER:** Is there anything you'd like to add?

**SABITONI:** I'd just repeat that it's an exciting time for the construction industry, and construction is a huge driver of GDP. So, I can't think of a better way to spend public money than on infrastructure, as we've talked about, and for the good-paying, middle-class jobs that will be created.

It will have a dramatic, positive impact as an economic multiplier.



Find out more at [Laborerslocal271.org](http://Laborerslocal271.org).





# Fall River gets \$2.5 million grant from MassWorks for drinking water, sewer in infrastructure

Grant funding for new sewer and drinking water pump station will support a \$20 million planned investment for cold storage facility

Fall River will benefit from a \$2.5 million MassWorks Infrastructure Program grant to fund key sewer and water system upgrades, the office of Gov. Charlie Baker announced in November.

At the same time, the administration announced the

latest round of Urban Agenda Grant Program awards, which total \$2.5 million to support 30 projects in 26 communities. Among the Urban Agenda recipients, Fall River-based Bristol County Chamber Foundation received a \$100,000 award for Viva Fall River, a program that seeks to activate vacant storefronts, attract new businesses, and increase downtown pedestrian traffic.

Both MassWorks and the Urban Agenda Grant Program are included in the Community One Stop for Growth platform, a single-application portal and collaborative review process of grant programs launched in January 2021 that "make targeted investments based on a development continuum."

Fall River's MassWorks award will fund the replacement of the Wilson Road Sewer Pump Station, which has exceeded its useful life, and construction of a new drinking water pump station.

"The Wilson Road facility serves the Fall River Industrial Park and these upgrades would improve capacity and resiliency," according to a statement.

"The work would also support a planned \$20 million private investment by Hutchens Holding III LLC (IceCube Cold Storage & Logistics) to construct a 200,000 square foot, best-in-class cold storage facility to serve an unmet need in Massachusetts."

Fall River's award is part of this year's round of MassWorks Infrastructure Program Grants and is included among 56 grants – the largest number of awards in a single year in six years – totaling \$66.5 million to 50 communities.

Among this year's MassWorks projects, 29 are reactivating underutilized sites, 27 are supporting transit-oriented developments and 29 have a mixed-use component. Additionally, 14 communities are receiving their first-ever MassWorks awards.

Including this year's round, the Baker-Polito Administration has awarded 326 MassWorks grants to 181 communities and has invested over \$608 million in public infrastructure projects throughout the Commonwealth.

These grants have directly supported the creation of 21,000 new housing units and tens of thousands of new construction and permanent jobs, while also leveraging over \$13 billion in private investment funding.

## 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](http://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](http://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](http://MassHousing.com).



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# RIAR: Rhode Island home prices up, but sales are slower

October sales data released November 19<sup>th</sup> by the Rhode Island Association of Realtors (RIAR) portrays a housing market that continues to slow.

According to RIAR, single-family home sales fell 22.3 percent from October 2020. But despite the slowdown in activity, the median price continued to climb, rising by 12.7 percent year-over-year.

Homes put under contract in October but not closed by month's end fell .13 percent. Increased momentum in the market seems unlikely as pending sales foretell closing activity in the months ahead, RIAR said.

"For the past 15 months, Rhode Island's housing market has shattered records. Our housing market will likely show more tempered activity in 2022 but we still expect sales to remain strong. Our hope is that more sellers will be willing to list their homes if the frenzy of the market dies down and COVID becomes less of an issue. For many homeowners, the worry of finding a place to move to, is what is preventing them from listing their home for sale," commented RIAR President Agueda Del Borgo.

Ms. Del Borgo further explained that Rhode Island has maintained less than a

two-month supply of homes for sale all year. A supply of six months at the current rate of sale typically denotes a market balanced between supply and demand.

Similar trends held for the condominium sector. Sales fell by 10.9 percent year-over-year while the median price rose to \$270,000, a 9.8 percent increase from October 2020. In contrast to the single-family home market however, pending sales rose 10.8 percent, an indication that frustrated buyers in the single-family home market may have turned their focus to condominiums.

The multifamily home market was the clear forerunner last month, with sales rising by 8.8 percent and the median price increasing 15.15 percent annually, to \$380,000, according to RIAR. An increase in pending sales of 11.2 percent also indicates that this sector of the market will remain strong in the months ahead. Throughout the year, the multifamily market held wide appeal to both investors and first-time homebuyers.

"Our housing shortage has created great demand for rentals. High rents and an abundance of potential tenants are great

enticements for investing in multifamily properties. The fact that Rhode Island is a vacation destination also provides some buyers in tourist areas with great potential for vacation rental income," commented Ms. Del Borgo.

The number of listings was down in all sectors of the market.

The conclusion of the mortgage forbearance moratorium and reduced worries about COVID, could help mitigate the shortage in the year ahead, according to RIAR.

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Here at RIBA, we are getting social. These days you'll find us in a few spots like Facebook (Meta), Twitter and LinkedIn.

We think it's a great way to stay connected and build upon our own unique membership community.

We're even launching our own RIBA YouTube channel and creating a brand-new easy-to-use app where you can tune in and hear from some amazing guests on important subjects that impact our industry.

Stay tuned for more details on our app; but in the meantime, we hope you'll like our Facebook page for industry news and follow us to learn about special events and more.

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## ***CODES...from page 1***

mechanical and electrical codes, according to Mr. Cambio.

"There's are still some tweaks we need to make to our codes to come up with a more standardized frost depth across the state. That's a little confusing right now, and that will be handled in the next cycle," he said.

"We want to continue to work on the section about constructing decks and make that a little clearer. A deck really is a residential floor, and it should be framed in the same way, but we don't provide that much information on it. So hopefully we can do a little better job with that section as well."

The Secretary of State has posted the official version of the 2021 Rhode Island Codes at [Rules.sos.ri.gov/regulations/part/510-00-00-1](https://rules.sos.ri.gov/regulations/part/510-00-00-1). The code revisions are based on the 2018 International Code Council 2018 model codes.

For more details on changes to the electrical code, see the story on page 3.

## ***How Codes are Adopted***

"The Building Code Standards Committee (BCSC) was formed by state government to work with the building code commissioner to adopt a national code or a model code, then make amendments to it as they think necessary to fit Rhode Island's needs for regulating design, construction and life safety in any buildings," Mr. Cambio explained.

"In the case of these revisions, the BCSC reviewed 2018 ICC model code, making recommendations to change or amend certain sections. These go out for public comment on the Secretary of State's website. We review all the comments. If we decide that some are worthy of going back and making changes, we would do that and then they would go back out for comment," he added.

"We have been playing catch-up. The ICC has already issued the 2021 model code, which the BCSC will review in the next cycle, in 2022 or 2023."

Ms. Georgakis explained further.

"All regulations in the State of Rhode Island have to be accompanied by a cost-benefit analysis. It's in law, and the code just happens to be one of the most lengthy regulations that the state passes. So doing the analysis on that is a complex and lengthy process, but it has to be done," she said.

"It's a good way to show the design professionals and the building community that we're making changes, but they're good changes. The benefits outweigh the costs."

## ***Why change the codes so often?***

"People might ask: We just adopted the 2018 code. Why do you want to start the 2021 code tomorrow and change again within a year?" Mr. Cambio commented.

"Obviously, we want to stay ahead of, or as close to, keeping up with the industry and life safety issues as we can. We want to keep up with the energy code, which is constantly changing. But one of the biggest things that flies under the radar is the Insurance Services Office's (ISO's) Building Code Effectiveness Grading System (BCEGS)," he explained.

"The ISO goes to all the municipalities and they do a question-

naire with the building officials. Depending on the code you're on, you get a better rating. For the public, the better the rating, the lower that municipality's homeowner insurance rates will be."

That rating affects everyone, according to Mr. Cambio.

"It helps determine insurance rates for homeowners, but it also affects builders because they're building a better product by keeping up with all the critical things that make houses safer."

**Hear the entire interview, which also covered the recruitment and training of building officials, on the Rhode Island Builders Association's News and Information Podcast #8. Now posted on iTunes and other major podcast platforms. For a direct link, contact RIBA Communications Manager Monica Cummings at [mcummings@ribuilders.org](mailto:mcummings@ribuilders.org).**



## ***WETLANDS...from page 1***

proposed," a statement from DEM said.

"Over the next several months, DEM will be releasing guidance documents and updated application forms as well as scheduling training workshops on the new rules. During the transition, the current DEM freshwater wetland rules (250-RICR-150-15-1) will remain in effect. Applicants planning to file completed applications (permits, edge verifications, etc.) with the DEM before July 1, 2022 are advised to follow the current freshwater wetland rules," the statement added.

For more details, visit. [DEM.ri.gov/newwetlandrules](https://DEM.ri.gov/newwetlandrules).

## ***RIBA has made opinions clear***

Over the six-year process of drafting the regulations, the Rhode Island Builders Association has made clear its belief that the new regulations need to be integrated with a statewide housing policy.

As currently written, the regulations would expand DEM and Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) jurisdiction over lands around freshwater wetland resources.

Watch *The Rhode Island Builder* for more information as this issue develops.



## ***LABOR...from page 10***

2021 is significantly higher than the previous peak of 67 percent established at the end of the 1990s and the 45 percent reached during the housing boom of the mid-2000s.

"Attracting skilled labor will remain a key objective for construction firms in the coming quarters, and will become more challenging as the labor market strengthens and the unemployment rate declines," a statement from NAHB said.

According to the September Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) data, total national job openings stand at 10.4 million. Open construction jobs declined somewhat to 333,000 unfilled positions in September, while the hiring rate remained solid at 4.7 percent and the layoff rate hit a four-year low of 1.6 percent.

Dr. Paul Emrath, NAHB vice president for survey and housing policy research, provides analysis at [Eyeonhousing.org/2021/11/record-share-of-nahb-members-report-labor-shortages](https://Eyeonhousing.org/2021/11/record-share-of-nahb-members-report-labor-shortages).



## Be sure to document dates of actual service to use mechanics' lien law

*Here's an update on the Rhode Island mechanics' lien law from attorney Girard R. Visconti of Savage Law Partners, Providence. Mr. Visconti was instrumental in drafting and passing the mechanics' lien statute.*

"When using the Mechanics' Lien Statute in the State of Rhode Island, it is imperative that dates of actual service providing for labor, materials and equipment be documented," Mr. Visconti advises.

"When a lien is filed and recorded, it reverts back 200 days to prove the value of those services, a subcontractor or general contractor must have evidence that labor, materials and equipment were provided on those dates within the 200 days. Dates of invoices are meaningless and a general contractor, or a subcontractor who is acting as a general contractor, must provide evidence of actual dates of service."

Contact Mr. Visconti at (401) 238-1311.



### **NATIONAL GRID...from page 16**

- Use an HVAC Check approved contractor

Path to Zero Net Energy – Additional Incentives for Projects Seeking Zero Energy Certification

To qualify for the additional incentives below (either Option A or Option B) projects must:

- Enroll during the early design phase
- Achieve Tier II or Tier III Path to Energy Efficiency incentive level (see above)

- Be fossil fuel free
- Projects seeking Passive House certification (Option B) are eligible to receive incentives in three installments:

- PHIUS Enrollment/Design Charrette
- PHIUS Pre-certification
- PHIUS Certification

Projects with up to 75 units are eligible for custom incentives. For more information and to participate in National Grid's RNC Program, please contact (888) 887-8841.



**For RIBA  
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