

**FEATURED  
PRODUCTS AND  
SERVICES FOR  
SEPTEMBER**

*Middle Section*

**2021 RIBA**

**Annual Meeting**

The Rhode Island Builders Association's 2021 Annual Meeting and election/installation of officers will take place Tuesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>. Watch for full details and the slate of nominees in the October issue.

*Page 4*

**CRLB raises  
registration fee**

The Rhode Island Contractors' Registration and Licensing Board has raised fees, made registrations annual, and adjusted the continuing education requirements.

*Page 3*

**State legislation:  
Help for housing**

Some success for housing comes from the 2021 session of the Rhode Island legislature and the governor's budget.

*Page 8*

**BIG receives  
award for  
excellence**

RIBA's wholly-owned insurance agency has been honored by the Beacon Mutual Insurance Co., which has donated to a RIBA charity as part of the award.

*Pages 10 and 31*

## CRLB adjusts registrations, fees, education rules

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

It's going to cost a little more to be a registered contractor in Rhode Island, contractors must renew registrations every year instead of every two years, and the continuing-education requirements are shifting a little.

It's all part of Gov. Daniel J. McKee's \$13.1 billion 2022 budget package (H6122a - Article 6 as amended, page 114), signed into law on July 6<sup>th</sup>.

Registration fees, previously \$200 every two years, are now \$150 per year. The continuing-education requirement is shifting from five hours every two years to two and a half hours every year.

"One of the driving forces behind these changes was an insurance issue," said Deputy Director Julietta Georgakis of the Dept. of Business Regulation.

"When contractors renew, they must prove that they have insurance for the duration of their registration, but most insurance policies are yearly. They couldn't show us a policy that was valid for two years."

There was a temptation for some contractors not to renew for that second year.

"We would get calls from consumers saying that this or that contractor was registered but that he or she didn't have valid insurance. So, these rule changes are a good way for us to say this contractor showed this office proof of insurance for the year."

There might still be contractors who let the insurance lapse before the year is out, Ms. Georgakis acknowledged.

"There are almost 11,000 registered contractors in Rhode Island, and these changes make sense."

This is the first change in the contractor registration fee since 2007.

For more information, visit [CRB.ri.gov](http://CRB.ri.gov).



### Statewide Wetlands Regulations

In other state regulatory news, statewide freshwater wetlands regulations are set to take effect in January. See the interview on this subject with Dept. of Environmental Management Acting Director Terrence Gray on page 28, and look for complete coverage in our October issue.

## Elizabeth Carpenter passes at 68

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

Elizabeth Catherine Carpenter, anchor of the Rhode Island Builders Association staff for over 23 years, died on July 15<sup>th</sup> at Rhode Island Hospital less than two months after her retirement. She was 68.

A resident of Rehoboth, Massachusetts, and the wife of Gregory D. Carpenter, "Liz" joined the RIBA staff in 1997. With a smile, she always remembered the headline in *The Rhode Island Builder Report* that announced her arrival: "RIBA hires Carpenter."



Elizabeth C. Carpenter

Because of her sharp mind, genial manner and talent for leadership and organization, Liz quickly gained the confidence of RIBA leaders, members and staff. Over the years, she served the association in many capacities, including organizing meetings and events, coordinating member benefits, and heading the office staff. By the time she retired in May, Liz was RIBA's director of operations.

Born in Norwood, Massachusetts, Liz was a daughter of the late Benjamin and Demetra (Ronis) Grudinskis. She

*see LIZ...page 3*

# President's Message



Carol O'Donnell

## RIBA answers labor shortage through the RCWP

As we all know, labor shortages have become a real drag on the economy. For various reasons, many people have not returned to their pre-pandemic work, some have changed careers, and still others have chosen to retire. But regardless of the cause, the Rhode Island Builders Association is already in a position to help our members who need workers.

RIBA is the hub of the Residential Construction Workforce Partnership (RCWP), which offers training around the state in carpentry, plumbing and electrical. These are intense, 26-week pre-apprenticeship programs that almost always have waiting

lists.

*Related story on page 31.*

All programs are free for employers and participants, thanks to grants from Real Jobs Rhode Island.

Participants in the RCWP programs include people of all ages who are in the residential construction industry already, are coming in from other industries, or are young people hoping to start careers in construction.

Many employers refer job candidates to the RCWP programs to get them ready for hiring. Others send current employees to be upskilled.

There are other programs within RCWP as well. These include the 15-week Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) basic carpentry course.

And there's a brand new, 15-week Pre-

Apprentice Energy Weatherization Auditor, Installer and Performance Evaluator Program.

Candidates for all RCWP programs are carefully screen by the RCWP staff, headed by Cheryl Boyd and Lou Cotoia.

Many RIBA members have taken advantage of the graduates of these programs, and they have found some great employees in the process.

Potential employers are even invited to stop by to meet the course participants and observe the classes, which have taken place via Zoom during the pandemic but which are now getting back to in-person sessions in CHARIHO, Woonsocket, East Providence Warwick and Central Falls.

For information, visit [RCWPjobs.com](http://RCWPjobs.com) and open a free account, or contact Cheryl at (401) 438-7400.



### The Rhode Island Builder

Official publication of the  
Rhode Island Builders Association  
since 1951

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## DEADLINE FOR THE OCTOBER ISSUE

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## Supply issues continue to hamper housing starts

*National Association of Home Builders*

Supply chain and labor challenges helped push overall housing starts down 7.0 percent in July to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.53 million units, according to an August 18<sup>th</sup> report from the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

The July reading of 1.53 million starts is the number of housing units builders would begin if development kept this pace for the next 12 months. Within this overall number, single-family starts decreased 4.5 percent to a 1.11 million seasonally adjusted annual rate. The multifamily sector, which includes apartment buildings and condos, decreased 13.1 percent to a 423,000 pace.

“Policymakers need to prioritize the U.S. supply chain for items like building materials to ensure builders can add additional inventory the housing market desperately needs,” said Chuck Fowke, chairman of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and a custom home builder from Tampa, Fla.

“The decline in single-family permits indicates that builders are slowing construction activity as costs rise,” said NAHB Assistant Vice President of Forecasting & Analysis Danushka Nanayakkara-Skillington.

“Starts began the year on a strong footing, but in recent months some projects have been forced to pause because of both the availability and costs of materials,” she added.

On a regional and year-to-date basis (January through July of 2021, compared with that same period a year ago), combined single-family and multifamily starts are 27.7 percent higher in the Northeast, 20.8 percent higher in the Midwest, 18.5 percent higher in the South and 27.7 percent higher in the West.

Overall permits increased 2.6 percent to a 1.64 million unit annualized rate in July. Single-family permits decreased 1.7 percent to a 1.05 million unit rate. Multifamily permits increased 11.2 percent to a 587,000 pace.

*See related stories on page 9.*



### **LIZ**...from page 1

was an avid gardener who loved working in her yard and spending time with her family.

Besides her husband, Liz leaves two children, Sarah Carpenter (who has worked on the RIBA staff part-time) and David Carpenter. She also leaves a sister and two brothers.

Visiting hours and a prayer service took place on July 20<sup>th</sup> at the Perry-McStay Funeral Home, East Providence.



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# Looking Ahead

## September 2021

♦ **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 [RI-Builders.org/vesl-training-program-details](http://RI-Builders.org/vesl-training-program-details). *Related story on page 31.*

🔧 ♦ **September 1<sup>st</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Painting 101. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 23.*

🔧 ♦ **September 3<sup>rd</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2 Credit Hours** - Topic is Hiring Best Practices for Builders. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 23.*

🔧 ♦ **September 7<sup>th</sup> Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Start and Grow Your Construction Business. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 23.*

🔧 ♦ **September 8<sup>th</sup> Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Using Video for Your Construction Business. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 24.*

🔧 ♦ **September 14<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Siding 101. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 24.*

♦ **September 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<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 27.*

🔧 ♦ **September 17<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Foundations and Floor Codes. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 24.*

🔧 ♦ **September 23<sup>rd</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Advanced Framing. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 25.*



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

 Indicates a RIBA-sponsored event.

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

 **September 24<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Kitchen Design and Installation. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 25.*

 **September 28<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Conflict Resolution in Construction. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 26.*

 **September 29<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 2½ Credit Hours** - Topic is Legal and Insurance Issues for the Contractor. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 27.*

 **September 30<sup>th</sup>: Continuing Education for Contractors - 4 Credit Hours** - Topic is RRP Lead Refresher. Taught via Zoom. *Details on page 26.*

## October 2021

**October 12<sup>th</sup>: RIBA Annual Meeting** - *Watch for more information.*

## 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 [homeshow@ribuilders.org](mailto:homeshow@ribuilders.org). *Watch for more information.*

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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.*

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

## Renewed Members\*

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*\*The Rhode Island Builders Association's Board of Directors, which approves new members, did not meet in July and August. Look for new members listings in the November issue.*

There are so many great reasons to be a RIBA member

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# Housing sees wins in 2021 legislative session, 2022 budget

By William G. Walsh *RIBA Government Affairs*

The 2021 session of the Rhode Island General Assembly addressed a number of issues important to the residential construction industry.

## ***Housing Production Priorities***

The Fiscal Year 2022 Budget improves housing governance by creating a deputy secretary of commerce for housing. Based on legislation sponsored by House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Warwick) and Senate President Dominick Ruggerio (D-North Providence), the “housing czar” will be responsible for managing the state’s housing initiatives, developing policies and plans, and coordinating implementation. The budget also reorganizes the Housing Resources Agency Coordinating Committee and expands its scope of authority to further support housing.

## ***Infrastructure Grant Program***

Derived from legislation championed by Senate Finance Chairman Ryan Pearson (D-Cumberland) and House Floor Manager John G. “Jay” Edwards (D-Tiverton), the budget transfers the Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program to the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank to leverage its expertise, streamlines program requirements, invests \$1 million in state funds in the program, and better positions it for receipt of federal relief and infrastructure funds.

Seeking to stimulate the development of affordable housing, the budget establishes a Housing Production Fund with \$25 million in seed funding, and is further supported by a dedicated revenue stream championed by Rep. June Speakman (D-Bristol) and Sen. Meghan Kallman (D-Pawtucket).

## ***Barriers to Housing***

Addressing municipal barriers to housing, the budget incentivizes communities to create special overlay zones promoting residential development, and also creates a school impact offset payments program, similar to the 40S program in Massachusetts, to reimburse qualifying communities for associated education costs related to development of smart growth districts.

## ***Spec Housing Tax Exemption Permanent***

With a year-end “sunset” looming on the provision, the General Assembly passed, and Gov. Daniel J. McKee signed, legislation by Senate Majority Leader Michael McCaffrey (D-Warwick) and Rep. Edwards to make permanent the tax exemption for certain residential property developments that have not been completed,

sold or occupied.

## ***Electronic Permitting***

Building on the successful development of the Viewpoint® platform for electronic permitting, the General Assembly passed, and the governor signed, legislation by Speaker Shekarchi and Senate Deputy Pro Tempore Roger Picard (D-Woonsocket) that requires all municipalities to implement electronic construction permitting processes for submission and approval of building permits, plans, inspection scheduling, project tracking and fee collection by July 1, 2023.

## ***Streamlined Licensure***

With support from the Dept. of Business Regulation and the Contractors’ Registration and Licensing Board, legislation by Senate Commerce Committee Chair Susan Sosnowski (D-South Kingstown) and Rep. Carol McEntee (D-South Kingstown) was signed into law by Gov. McKee that aligns Rhode Island’s commercial roofing contractor standards with those of neighboring states, including the spreading of continuing education requirements across two-year licensure cycles, and elimination of bonding requirements.

## ***Study Commissions***

Roughly three decades removed from the last comprehensive review of our land-use laws, Speaker Shekarchi championed the creation of a Land Use Study Commission to review the state’s land use laws, including impacts on housing, development, environment and preservation, and to provide recommendations to update the last to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth. Comprised of specialists from diverse fields and specialties, the 18-member commission has yet to be named as this writing.

With few communities meeting the 10 percent affordable housing benchmark, Rep. Speakman guided the creation of a Commission to Study the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act. The Rhode Island Builders Association is a named participant on the 17-member commission, and RIBA President Carol O’Donnell has designated past RIBA President David A. Caldwell Jr. of Caldwell and Johnson Inc. to serve as the association’s representative

## ***Potential Fall Special Session***

With updated clarifications on use of federal relief funds trickling in, the General Assembly has indicated a potential special session in the fall to set a strategy and make initial investments of the state’s \$1.1 billion share of the American Rescue Plan funding.

see *LEGISLATION...next page*



William G. Walsh

# Framing lumber prices dropping, but other materials remain high

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

There's finally a light at the end of the supply crisis tunnel, but that's just for framing lumber. Sheathing, laminated veneer lumber (LVL), structural beams and other materials based on chemicals remain sky high.

That's the update from Bob Baldwin of R.B. Homes, past president of the Rhode Island Builders Association and RIBA's state representative to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

The conversation took place in late July.

"Lumber is down. As of July 9<sup>th</sup>, it closed at \$575 per thousand board feet, compared with its 2020 high of \$1,735," Mr. Baldwin reported.

"On the futures market, it's \$570 for November. The \$500 range will be a good place for the prices to stabilize," he added.

Prices for sheathing, LVLs, vinyl products, paint, caulk and other chemical-based products remain high, however.

"The industry is blaming glue prices, but it's been a long time since the chemical plants in Texas froze in January," he pointed out.

"Framing lumber is headed in the right direction, however, and is at a much more palatable level. Even the expensive materials we mentioned have stopped going up since July."

When will savings on framing lumber be felt by the industry?

"In the fall, after the lumber yards have cleared their more expensive inventory," Mr. Baldwin said.

## Supply Chain Summit

On July 16<sup>th</sup>, a White House Summit on the Homebuilding Supply Chain took place in Washington, with active participation by NAHB.

Participating were Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, HUD Secretary Marcia Fudge, Assistant to the President and Director of the National Economic Council Brian Deese, Assistant to the President and Director of the Domestic Policy Council Ambassador Susan Rice, and Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers Cecelia Rouse.

The meeting provided a forum to discuss issues and possible solutions related to the supply chain, specifically lumber prices and distribution, as it all relates to affordable housing.

While lumber prices have dropped in recent weeks, NAHB continues its push for long-term solutions, including increased production by U.S. lumber mills and a new trade agreement with Canada.

To learn more about how NAHB has been working for its members, visit [nabh.org](http://nabh.org).



## Lumber costs continue to slam housing affordability

Soaring building material costs, high demand and low inventory have added tens of thousands of dollars to the price of a new home and caused housing affordability to fall to its lowest level in nearly a decade during the second quarter of 2021.

According to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)/Wells Fargo Housing Opportunity Index (HOI) released August 5<sup>th</sup>, 56.6 percent of new and existing homes sold between the beginning of April and end of June were affordable to families earning the U.S. median income of \$79,900.

This is down sharply from the 63.1 percent of homes sold in the first quarter of 2021 and the lowest affordability level since the beginning of the revised series in the first quarter of 2012.

"Runaway construction cost growth, such as ongoing elevated prices for oriented strand board that has skyrocketed by nearly 500 percent since January 2020, continues to put upward pressure on home prices," said NAHB Chairman Chuck Fowke, a custom home builder from Tampa, Fla.

"Policymakers must address supply chain bottlenecks for building materials that are raising costs and harming housing affordability."

NAHB analysis shows that higher costs for lumber products have added nearly \$30,000 to the price of an average, new single-family home and raised the rental price of a new apartment unit by more than \$90, according to NAHB Chief Economist Robert Dietz.



## LEGISLATION...from previous page

The Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program and construction workforce development programs are RIBA's top priorities for catalyzing housing development and the local economy.

With such a return, other legislation may come back into the fold. RIBA's top legislative priorities pending are legislation by House Deputy Speaker Charlene Lima (D-Cranston) and Leader McCaffrey to reform the quorum and voting standards for zon-

ing, planning and state housing appeals boards, and efforts to create dedicated funding streams for workforce training grants to the residential construction industry and state and local building officials championed by Senate President Pro Tempore Hanna Gallo (D-Cranston) and House Education Committee Chairman Joe McNamara (D-Warwick).

Watch *The Rhode Island Builder* for ongoing information as these issues develop.





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10/September 2021



## Member News

# BIG honored with award for excellence

The Builders Insurance Group (BIG), a full-service insurance agency wholly owned by the Rhode Island Builders Association, is one of five agencies to win a 2020 Lighthouse Award for Agency Excellence from the Beacon Mutual Insurance Co.



The Lighthouse Award is presented annually to Beacon Mutual's top agencies "for exhibiting performance excellence through profitable premium growth, new business growth, and retention outcomes, and through a demonstrated partnership with and commitment to Beacon based on their submission quality; their policyholder support with claims, loss prevention, underwriting and premium audit; their service as a market information resource; and their commitment to serve the Rhode Island community," a statement from Beacon said.

Winning agencies selected local charities to receive a total of \$5,000 from Beacon Mutual. BIG selected the Residential Construction Workforce Partnership. *Related story on page 31.*

Learn about BIG at [Builderinsgroup.com](http://Builderinsgroup.com).



## NAHB Area 1 meeting set for Sept. 10

**WHEN:** Friday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**WHERE:** HBRAWM Headquarters, 240 Cadwell Dr., Springfield, MA 01104

**COST:** \$30

**FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:** Visit [HBRAMA.com/event/area-one-fall-meeting](http://HBRAMA.com/event/area-one-fall-meeting) or call (617) 773-3305.

The National Association of Home Builders Area 1 Fall Meeting will take place September 10<sup>th</sup> at the office of the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Western Massachusetts.

The meeting includes presentations, round-table discussions on industry and housing issues in the region, and networking for NAHB affiliate associations in Area 1, which includes the six New England States.

All members of the Rhode Island Builders Association are invited to attend. Lunch is included.

National officials planning to attend include NAHB Chief Lobbyist Jim Tobin, NAHB First Vice President Jerry Konter, Immediate Past Chairman Greg Ugalde and NAHB candidate for 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Chair Buddy Hughes.



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



## Clambake returns, 400 attend!

After a year with no Clambake because of COVID-19, nearly 400 members and guests returned to the Rhode Island Builders Association's biggest social event of the year, on August 6<sup>th</sup>. In an interesting twist, the 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Clambake returned to the beautiful Kempenaar's Clambake Club in Middletown for the first time since 2005.

The universal comment, heard throughout the day: "It's so great to be able to get together again!" Later in the day, though, "What great food!" was also heard.

The Kempenaar's bake staff outdid

themselves with chowder, clam cakes, hot dogs, an extensive raw bar and, for the main meal, steamers, brown bread, sausage, chicken and lobster with all the fixings.

Rain predicted earlier in the week never materialized, and the weather was gorgeous.

Informal games of horseshoes and corn hole took place throughout the day, with organized contests of nail driving, the insulation toss and, of course, the famous, RIBA-invented sport of plywood throwing.

Special guests this year included Jerry Konter, first vice chairman of the Board of

the National Association of Home Builders, and his wife, Marcy. Also attending were several officials from the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Connecticut.

Also stopping by were Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea and State Treasurer Seth Magaziner.

RIBA thanks the generous sponsors, who made the Clambake possible and the low ticket prices that were available. *See the complete list of sponsors on page 15.*

*-Paul Eno*



Joe Cracco of Modern Yankee Builders picks up his Clambake tickets from the RIBA staffers, who made everyone feel welcome. From left are Elise Geddes, Monica Cummings and Robin Barlow.

There was a large contingent from Devereaux Electric!



And the bean bags were flying all day.



The crew from Butera Building brought their cigars.

Amity Electric was well represented.



It's the guys from RIKB Design Build!



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



## Premier Sponsor Andersen Corp.



"As an active member of RIBA, Andersen Windows is proud to support such a great organization. The support, leadership, and value RIBA provides to its members and communities is also a common core value shared at Andersen!"

-Andersen Corp.

## Premier Sponsor Arnold Lumber



**Matt Semonik, vice president of sales & operations at Arnold Lumber Co.**

## Premier Sponsor Beacon Mutual Insurance



Thanks to Beacon and our many other sponsors, the price of Clambake tickets remained low, and many more people were able to attend the 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Clambake.



▲ You can always count on a large group from Tradesource at the Clambake.



▲ Among the special guests were officials from the National Association of Home Builders and the Home Builders and Remodelers Association of Connecticut. From left are Bill Conkey of National Building Products, RIBA State Representative Bob Baldwin, RIBA President Carol O'Donnell, NAHB Vice Chairman Jerry Konter, and Marcy Konter.



▲ Also dropping by were Dept. of Business Regulation Deputy Director Julietta Georgakis and State Building Code Commissioner James Cambio.



▲ Enjoying the sunshine in lobsterland was the entire team from the Builders Insurance Group, a subsidiary of the Rhode Island Builders Association.

## Premier Sponsor Caldwell & Johnson



**Past RIBA President David A. Caldwell Jr.**

## Premier Sponsor Consolidated Concrete



**George Pesce (right) and Lanny D'Amico of Consolidated Concrete Corp.**

There's probably no family more supportive of the Rhode Island Builders Association than the Pesces, and the same goes for the folks who work for their company, Consolidated Concrete Corp., based in East Providence.

In fact, the Pesce family's involvement goes back to RIBA's origins in the 1940s. The late J. Robert "Bob" Pesce served as RIBA treasurer for 15 years. "We've always loved RIBA," says George Pesce, president of Consolidated. "The networking is very valuable to us, and we never miss the Home Show and many of the social events like the Annual Clambake."

RIBA thanks the Pesces for their continuing support!

Premier Sponsor  
**Consumers  
Propane**



▲ Andy Devereaux sends that plywood soaring.



▲ Paul Leclerc deftly keeps his footing during the insulation toss.

Premier Sponsor  
**Coventry Lumber**



**Sean and Ryan Finnegan of  
Coventry Lumber (FINETCO®).**

For the Finnegan brothers, Sean, Ryan and Evan, the leadership of their dad, Bill Finnegan, has shown them not only how to help run the family company, FINETCO®, as they take more responsibility for it in its second half-century.

It has also shown them how important it is to support their trade association, and that support for RIBA has taken many forms.

These include sponsorship not only of the Clambake but of all major RIBA events, serving on the Board of Directors, and being faithful advertisers in *The Rhode Island Builder*.

"Our support for RIBA and the mutual benefits it provides are things we always value," Sean Finnegan says.

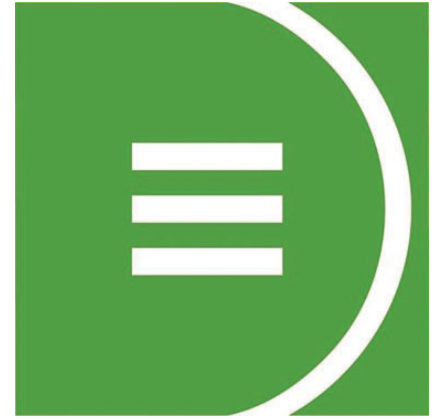


▲ From left: RIBA Latino Outreach Coordinator Betty Bernal, Rhode Island Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea, RIBA Education and Workforce Development Committee Co-Chairman Ron Caniglia, and RIBA President Carol O'Donnell.



▲ A diverse group took the opportunity for a conversation on the lumber and supply line crises. From left: State Treasurer Seth Magaziner, RIBA State Representative Bob Baldwin, NAHB Vice Chairman Jerry Konter, Sean and Ryan Finnegan of Coventry Lumber, Steve Rendine of Douglas Lumber, Matt Semonik of Arnold Lumber, and Bill Conkey of National Building Products.

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Kitchens &  
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**Steve Rendine, general manager of Douglas Lumber, Kitchens & Home Center, a proud supporter of RIBA for many decades.**



## Premier Sponsor

### National Building Products



*National Building Products was well represented at the Clambake, including by the recently retired Mike McDole, center.*



▲ A picture that speaks for itself.



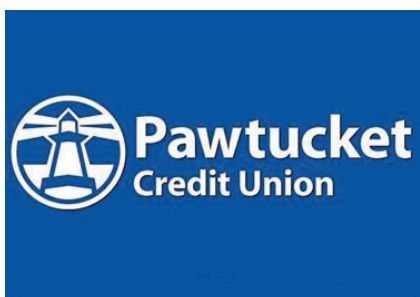
▲ The crowd awaits the feed.



▲ This was the first RIBA Clambake in 23 years not managed by Director of Operations Elizabeth Carpenter, who retired in May, then passed away in July (see page 1). Here, friends and staff members from RIBA and the Builders Insurance Group offer a toast to Liz's memory.

## Premier Sponsor

### Pawtucket Credit Union



## Premier Sponsor

### Pella Windows



*Here's a pretty proud team from Pella Windows!*



▲ One of the big door-prize winners was George Grayson of Tradesource!

## Premier Sponsor

### Peregrine Group



## Premier Sponsor

### ProProducts Web Development



*The ProProducts contingent was one of the largest at the clambake!*

## Premier Sponsor

### Riverhead Building Supply



*Ken Coury, center, led the merry band from Riverhead.*

## Premier Sponsor

### Scituate Lumber



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**The Rhode Island Builders Association  
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our 2019 Clambake such a success!**

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**Thanks also to those who generously  
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**...and Congratulations to the Clambake  
Competition Winners!**

**PLYWOOD THROWING: Brent McNutt  
NAIL DRIVING: Kevin Shea  
INSULATION TOSS: Brent McNutt**

# Are our homes getting enough fresh air?

## nationalgrid UPDATE with Laura Rodormer



The first question to ask is: Where is the fresh air in my home coming from? And, just as importantly, how is the stale air leaving? Or maybe a better question to ask: Is the stale air leaving at all?

Let's explore the most common ways to ventilate your home:

- Opening your windows and doors: This can be a great way to introduce fresh air into the house and get rid of stale air. But is it reliable?

What about the winter? Do you want your windows open in February? What if you are running an air conditioner? Opening the windows would be counterproductive. What about the potential pollen and humidity you are letting into the house in the summer?

- Bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans: These ventilate your home by exhausting the stale air, which is then replaced by fresh air through the cracks and holes in your walls, floors and ceilings. But there are also drawbacks.

How long do you leave these on for each day? Is it enough to exhaust and replace the entire volume of air in your house? Are the fans operating and/or installed properly? Often, these units lose efficacy over time because they get clogged, the ducting fills with water from condensation, or they weren't installed properly to begin with.

Where is the replacement fresh air coming from? The outside,

where it may be below freezing in the winter? Through your basement or crawlspace, which may be bringing unwanted issues like humidity, mold, radon, etc. into your living space?

Through your garage? Did you know that, on average, your garage doors need to be left open 7 minutes after starting your car to clear all of the carbon monoxide?

- The Stack Effect: This is the most common form of ventilation. Simply put, the warm, stale air in your home rises and exits the house through the small gaps and holes in your ceiling, and is replaced with fresh air coming in through the gaps and holes in your floor.

Is this a good method of ventilation? How much air is actually moving? Is the warm air that's exiting your home creating potential condensation and moisture issues? If the warm, moist interior air is escaping into a cold attic, it has the potential to condense on the underside of the roof deck, which could lead to moisture and mold. Where is the fresh air coming in from?

Another way to ventilate your home is by mechanical means. There are several ways to do this.

- Exhaust-Only Ventilation: This is very simple and, in most cases, can be accomplished for less than \$100. All it entails is installing a bath fan rated for continuous operation, and setting its timer for an appropriate amount of time per day, typically 12-24 hours, based on the volume of the home and the rate of flow.

- Energy Recovery Ventilators (ERV) or Heat Recovery Ventilators (HRV): These units bring in fresh air and exhaust stale air at the same rate.

There are many benefits. The stale air passes through a core where it transfers its energy to the fresh air coming in. So, in the winter, for example, the stale air "pre-heats" the fresh air coming in. This will save money and reduce stress on your equipment. The fresh air is filtered. This is beneficial both for allergies and during pan-

*see AIR...page 32*

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# Featured Products and Services for September 2021



A Rhode Island Builder Magazine Special Section

**Kitchen**   
**BY: FINETCO® Designs**



If you are considering a kitchen remodel, kitchen cabinetry or design ideas for your new kitchen, Finetco® has the expertise to meet your expectations and offer you options for your project. Our design professionals have the experience and knowledge to work with you in product selection and design. Our showrooms offer a great selection of cabinet styles, colors and solid surface options.

With any home remodeling project or new construction project, space and functionality are key factors. Yes, our Designers can design an incredible looking space, but if it's not functional, where is the value? During your initial meeting one of our Designers will work with you to determine how functional your current space is and how a new layout will improve or impede the functionality of your space, and make recommendations on how to move forward. To show our appreciation to you for selecting Finetco® we want to give you a "Pie for Life". Enjoy a freshly baked pie for your Thanksgiving dinner every year as part of our Pie for Life program!



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As custom door suppliers and aluminum window suppliers, the folks at Stergis pride themselves on quality. Bring the best home with Stergis!

You can feel confident knowing that Stergis Windows and Doors have been installed in over three million homes throughout the Northeast. Find Stergis products at all FINETCO® affiliates: Coventry Lumber, Waterford Building Supply, West Haven Lumber or E.L. Morse Lumber, and bring your client along!

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**Waterford Building Supply, Waterford, CT. • 860-443-1167**

**West Haven Lumber, West Haven, CT • 203-933-1641**

**www.finetco.net • Page 18**

## At Pella® Windows: Easy-Slide Operator

**T**he Easy-Slide Operator – Pella® Corporation's innovative new hardware solution – has been named winner of the Best of Show at the 2021 International Builders' Show, which was held virtually February 8-10, 2021.

The judges were especially impressed with Pella's game-changing, patent-pending slide mechanism,

which replaces the traditional crank to open and close casement and awning windows. The Easy-Slide Operator was selected by a panel of 18 industry and media judges.

The recently launched hardware solution allows homeowners to open and close casement and awning windows by easily sliding the operator up to open and down to close the window.

The Easy-Slide Operator is currently available on Pella Impervia® fiberglass casement and awning windows. The company plans to expand the availability of Easy-Slide Operator to additional product lines in late 2021.

Visit <https://www.pella.com/ideas/windows/features-options/hardware/easy-slide-operator/> for more information or, better yet, visit one of Pella's four convenient locations!



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**Corporate Headquarters, Fall River, Mass. • Page 25**

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## Member Profile: Sophia Karvunis of Closets Etc.

# An unexpected fluke leads to a dynamic career

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

From life in northern Indiana, to a degree in English Literature, to editing publications for the Craighead Research Group, to owning a closet company in Connecticut and Rhode Island, Sophia Karvunis can assure you that life's road can be full of surprise twists and turns.

In fact, her interest in, and knowledge about, storage spaces was born of necessity because her family moved so much. Armed with degrees from Indiana University and New York University, Sophia has called a number of places home.

Closets Etc., the company she runs with her business partner, Gero Meyersiek, was born in 1987, founded by a lady in Connecticut who's not part of our story.

"Like so many things in life, my business career began as a fluke. I started working for a closet company in Massachusetts, in a quasi-partnership with the owner. But I didn't actually have much control. So, when we dissolved that partnership, I was looking for a closet company to buy and it just happened to be in Connecticut."

Sophia inherited a list of about 50 subcontractors at a time when large developments in Connecticut were starting to slow down. She had to make some changes.

"At the time, the company did wire, which involves mostly metal frames for hanging, and maybe some shelving. It's limited. You can't use wire for drawers, so we shifted to melamine," Sophia recalls.

"Melamine" involves a pressed-wood product coated with the compound -- wait for it -- melamine.

"So, for the most part, we needed a different set of subcontractors. But many of these were going out of business, and many others weren't doing large condo complexes or apartment buildings anymore," she adds.



Sophia Karvunis

Sophia admits that she was uncertain about her future in the closet industry.

"I thought I might go into it for just a year or so, that maybe it would be fun or maybe it wouldn't, and here we are all these years later!"

Today, Closets Etc. works throughout Connecticut and Rhode Island, and covers parts of Massachusetts.

"Over the years, we've done some projects as far away as Cape Cod, but it had to be a big project for us to make that sort of trip and then have our guys stay overnight," Sophia explains. "We're so busy that the distant projects don't always make sense."

Currently, Closets Etc. has two designers in Connecticut, and Sophia herself does the job in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. There are three installers.

And what, you may ask, is the "Etc."? Well, we're talking design and installation of storage spaces for all kinds of bedrooms, laundry rooms, living rooms and dens, offices and work spaces, basements and garages, along with entryways and mudrooms.

Closets Etc. joined the Rhode Island Builders Association in 2015, and Sophia has become a familiar face at many RIBA events. She is currently an officer of the Professional Women in Building Council (PWB), and is also involved in the National Association of Women in Construction.

"RIBA offers many wonderful services, such as the tuition-free classes and workforce training, and I certainly love the magazine!" she says.

Closets Etc. is growing. In Connecticut, the company is moving from Meriden to larger facilities in New Britain because they need more space. In Rhode Island, there is a showroom in West Kingston.

As with just about everyone else in the residential construction industry, Sophia is looking for workers.

"I'm trying to find another installer, which is like pulling teeth. I know everyone in the construction industry is saying it's just impossible right now to find people," Sophia says. "I also need another designer here in Rhode Island to help me because I'm working 24/7 and have been for a long time. But that takes time as well."

In the meantime, Sophia has enjoyed the ride.

"Going from being an editor for Craighead to owning a closet company has been a big change, but it's been great meeting all the people I've come to know," she states.

"It's been especially great meeting so many women in the construction field, which was so different from anything I had experienced before. It's been amazing."

### ***Closets Etc.***

***Co-Owner: Sophia Karvunis***

***RIBA member since: 2015***

***Focus: Residential, Commercial Storage Spaces***

***Serves: Southern New England***

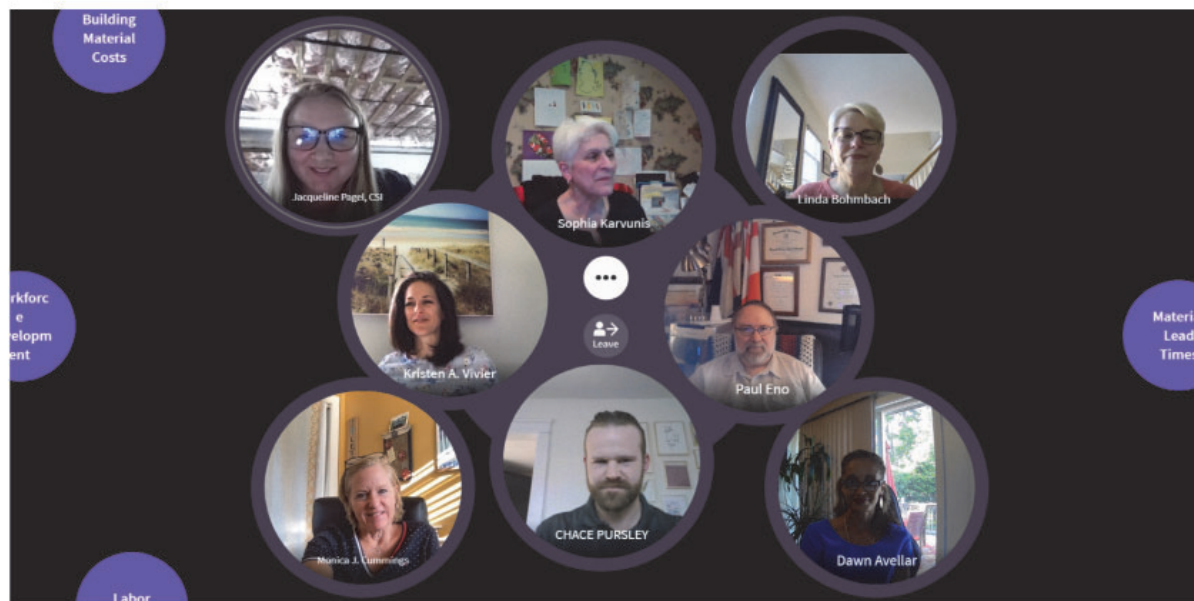
***Founded: Original company - 1987***

***Based: East Greenwich, Rhode Island and Meriden, Connecticut***



## *Professional Women in Building : PWB NEWS*

***Thank you to all our members and guests who joined us for our first Toucan Networking Event! A great evening of learning about what others are facing in the industry plus experiencing a new, more interactive, online networking platform.***



***Stay tuned about our first In-Person Networking event this Fall at East Greenwich Yacht Club!!***



### ***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>

The Rhode Island Builders Association continues the Contractor Training Program, expanding its educational offerings for members and their employees free of tuition charge, and providing all classes necessary to meet state-mandated educational requirements for contractors. Call for details and to register. Contact RIBA's Professional Development Manager Bob Salvas at (401) 438-7400 or e-mail to [bsalvas@ribuilders.org](mailto:bsalvas@ribuilders.org).

## 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 take five hours of continuing education before his or her next renewal date, and must provide class certificates as evidence of completion.*

2½ Credit Hours:

### Painting 101 September 1<sup>st</sup>

**WHEN:** Wednesday, September 1<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](mailto:bsalvas@ribuilders.org), or call (401) 438-7400.

Join instructor Ben LeBlanc 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.



2½ Credit Hours:

### Start and Grow Your Construction Business September 7<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Tuesday, September 7<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. A must for those who don't have much experience.



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

2 Credit Hours:

### Hiring Best Practices for Builders September 3<sup>rd</sup>

**WHEN:** Friday, September 3<sup>rd</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 Gary Convertino to learn an "A to Z" approach to helping you, as a business owner, navigate the hiring of an employee. Hiring the right people can make or break a construction company! Learn how to do it correctly.

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:

## Using Video for Your Construction Business

September 8<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Wednesday, September 8<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 Bill Parmentier to learn how to best use video to enhance and 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.



2½ Credit Hours:

## Siding 101

September 14<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Friday, September 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.

Join instructor Chris Boilard 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.



2½ Credit Hours:

## Foundations and Floor Codes

September 17<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Friday, September 17<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 Larry Desormier, this class provides a 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:

## Advanced Framing September 23<sup>rd</sup>

2½ Credit Hours:

## Kitchen Design & Installation September 24<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Thursday, September 23<sup>rd</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 John Erickson to learn about the code-approved floor, wall and roof framing details, along with how to reduce materials and improve energy efficiency without reducing strength.

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.



**WHEN:** Friday, September 24<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 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, with 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.



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2½ Credit Hours:

## *Conflict Resolution in Construction*

September 28<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Tuesday, September 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 Jeff Deckman, this course will give you the tools to limit unproductive conflicts, resolve conflicts, and maximize your ability to keep your teams focused and working together.

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.



4 Credit Hours:

## *RRP Lead Refresher*

September 30<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Thursday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, 8 a.m. to noon

**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 Scott Asprey, this four-hour class is a 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. 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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# OSHA-10 Course

September 15<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Wednesday and Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day.

**WHERE:** Online via Zoom

**COST:** FREE for members and their employees, with a \$25 materials charge.

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

This is a 10-hour class, held over two days. 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. 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.

RIBA

## 2½ Credit Hours: Legal and Insurance Issues for the Contractor

September 29<sup>th</sup>

**WHEN:** Wednesday, September 29<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 instructors Merrill Friedmann, George Lough and Chuck Lowe to learn about these important subjects.

Do you have questions on: Your corporate structure; your insurance (what is needed, what is covered, what is NOT covered); or Workers Compensation?

This class is for you!

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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# Terrence Gray

Acting Director, R.I. Dept of Environmental Management

*Terrence Gray assumed DEM's top post on June 19<sup>th</sup>, following the departure of Director Janet Coit, who accepted an appointment at the U.S. Dept. of Commerce. Mr. Gray has 34 years of experience at DEM. As deputy director for environmental protection, he oversaw all major environmental regulatory programs. Since 2019, he was the primary point person on the Rhode Island interagency team for the Transportation and Climate Initiative. He has also led several permitting and enforcement program initiatives and reforms at DEM and has been directly involved in Rhode Island's Brownfields program since its inception.*

*Mr. Gray holds a bachelor of science degree in chemical engineering from Lehigh University, a master of science in civil engineering from Northeastern University, and a master of business administration from the University of Rhode Island.*



**THE BUILDER: So, the new statewide freshwater wetlands regulations are finally posted. There will be much speculation and even misinformation about what the revisions actually mean. Can you point out and clarify the major provisions in the new regulations?**

**GRAY:** There are two things to really think about when it comes to changes in the new regulations, and these go back to the big compromise that was struck years ago in the legislature, which led to authorizing the idea that we have a statewide standard for freshwater wetlands regulations.

That was so the builders wouldn't have to worry about complying with multiple local wetlands standards, and there would be one set of rules to apply across Rhode Island.

In exchange for that, or as part of that, there was also a discussion that the previous regulations weren't really protective enough for certain kinds of wetlands. So, a science-driven stakeholder dialogue came up with an approach that created some standards for buffers across the state. Additionally, the state is divided into two zones, based on density of development and the amount of impervious cover; kind of urban and non-urban areas. There are two buffer standards for different types of wetlands in each one of those areas.

That's one big difference. The other big difference is that we wanted to counter the workload impacts of those changing buffer standards by creating different tiers of permits. We used to have three tiers of permits, where you had things that were exempt from permits, then a "preliminary determination," and a "significant

alteration."

Under the new regulations, we've created a new level of permit – an easier permit to get. We've expanded the exemptions, and we've created what we call a "wetlands permit" for a project that complies with standards. We've also created a "wetlands permit" variance.

**THE BUILDER: What's the rationale behind the 100-foot buffer requirements in the new regulations?**

**GRAY:** Well, it's not just 100-foot buffers. The legislation created a 200-foot "jurisdictional area" from a well. We created different buffers based on the area of the state that the project is in, and the type of wetland involved. So, they could require anywhere from 25 feet all the way out to 200. It's not a universal 100-foot requirement.

**THE BUILDER: What's the variance process?**

**GRAY:** The variance process is related to the wetlands permit. There are certain standards where you have to stay out of a buffer, so many feet away; don't disturb vegetated areas.

If you can't build your projects under those conditions or those setbacks or distances, then you can apply for a variance. We'll work with the builder under the permit process to find the lowest-impact alternative that works for that project.

It's important to know that we deny very few permits. So, this isn't a ban on construction. It's not a prohibition against applying for a permit. It just means that if the lot is hard to navigate, and has some constraints on it, there might be a little more permitting involved than if the lot more easily meets the standard.

**THE BUILDER: We understand that the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) will soon produce similar regulations.**

**GRAY:** Yes, DEM is closely coordinating with CRMC, and it's our intent to be as in-synch as possible. It follows the mindset that we want one consistent set of rules for the entire state, both in the coastal zone and the upland area.

**THE BUILDER: How have the municipalities reacted to these new regulations?**

**GRAY:** There's been a mixed reaction. Some have commented from an operational standpoint. Others feel that we're not stringent enough, and that our standard should be more protective in their particular jurisdiction.

see *INTERVIEW...next page*

## ***INTERVIEW...from previous page***

The goal of these regulations is to be consistent across the state.

### **THE BUILDER: How will you communicate with stakeholders when it comes to introducing and explained the new regulations?**

**GRAY:** A few things. Anyone who commented on the regulations during the process has or will receive notice that they were filed, and when they take effect (January 15<sup>th</sup>). We're also communicating with the stakeholders who were really active in the discussion, including the Rhode Island Builders Association, and remain committed to working with them under an ongoing dialogue over the next months.

There are other discussions going on right now or planned for the fall related to land-use issues, and the need for housing in particular. I've committed to take any recommendations that come out of those dialogues that relate to these wetlands regulations and take a hard look at doing subsequent amendments to make sure that that we're in synch with the bigger discussion to make sure that Rhode Island has sufficient housing stock.

Our mission is to protect wetlands, but we do not want to be a barrier to housing.

### **THE BUILDER: What are the grandfathering provisions and procedures?**

**GRAY:** We don't have any grandfathering provisions per se, but we're not reopening any existing permits. If you have a permit, it's good.

Secondly, anything that's applied for between now and January 15<sup>th</sup> will be done under the existing process, under the current rules. So, projects that are in design, projects that may be in some kind of a municipal review process but haven't come to DEM yet – all of those will be handled under the existing model if they come in before January 15<sup>th</sup>.

On that date, we shift over to the new model, and that's when the new buffers will take effect and the new permit process will start.

### **THE BUILDER: Is there anything else you'd like to share with the residential construction community right now?**

**GRAY:** Yes! We've been doing some great work on the Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (OWTS) program that is important for your readers.

We've just launched an online scheduling program. So, if someone needs an appointment to check out their OWTS system, rather than calling and leaving a message, working with our inspectors directly, they can use an online scheduling form and get an appointment set up.

We've also been working very hard on providing public records online. We've made a very significant investment, hundreds of thousands of dollars, in terms of scanning our old files and making them available online. So, if somebody wants to see a plan for the septic system when it was built years ago, they can go online and find new search tools. So, people will no longer have to come in here and do a paper file search.

One of my priorities is to update our data systems, so people can

file applications online, can check the status of their applications online and then get quick comments and quick decisions on their permit applications. We've been working with the governor's office and the budget office to get funding for a new permit tracking system. RIBA has supported us in this, and agrees that there is a big need for it.

We're ready to go. We just need the dollars to pay for the project.

As far as 2021 legislation, the biggest measure the General Assembly dealt with having to do with DEM was the Act on Climate. That takes some of the goals that are already in state law and mandates them.

These are now enforceable goals when it comes to greenhouse gas reduction. That applies to the electricity-generating sector, to transportation, and it will eventually apply to the construction sector.

We'll be looking at structures, heat and air-conditioning systems, and finding ways to make the carbon footprint from those systems as small as possible.

It's still a ways away.




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# Mass. highlights \$1 billion housing plan using federal funds

State officials joined municipal leaders in Everett on August 2<sup>nd</sup> to note progress on redeveloping the St. Therese parish property into new housing for families and seniors.

The project is supported by the Baker-Polito administration's Commonwealth Builder initiative, which aims to connect families with homeownership opportunities "so they can build wealth, especially in communities of color."

In his remarks, Gov. Charlie Baker highlighted his proposal to

invest \$1 billion in housing initiatives like Commonwealth Builder as part of its \$2.9 billion plan to invest a portion of Massachusetts' federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act in "urgent priorities to support communities of color and low-income workers."

"Our proposal to invest \$1 billion in housing priorities using a portion of Massachusetts' federal funds would enable the Commonwealth Builder program to have an even greater impact as we seek to connect more families with homeownership opportunities and the chance to build long-term wealth," Gov. Baker said.

"By making these investments, we can accelerate an equitable recovery, support those who were hardest-hit by the pandemic, and create real and lasting change in communities across Massachusetts."

The Neighborhood Developers is in the process of transforming the former church property in Everett into 77 new, affordable rental homes with supportive services for seniors, as well as six townhomes that will be sold to working families at affordable prices. It anticipates accepting applications to live in the apartments and townhomes by early 2022.


The Neighborhood Developers is building the affordable senior rental homes with affordable housing resources from the Commonwealth and with MassDevelopment financing. The East Boston Neighborhood Health Center will provide on-site services to senior residents.

The for-sale townhomes are being developed under the Commonwealth Builder program, which is administered by MassHousing.

From the \$1 billion total for the program, \$500 million in federal funds would be dedicated to expanding homeownership opportunities in the Commonwealth Builder program, according to Gov. Baker.

The additional \$500 million in federal funding would be used to create more affordable rental homes, including "service-rich" rental units for seniors and veterans.

"Our housing crisis demands a strategy that will result in more housing of all types across the Commonwealth," said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Mike Kennealy.

"Thanks to MassHousing for implementing the Commonwealth Builder program, we can target homeownership opportunities to families that have historically faced barriers to purchasing homes and the chance to build the wealth that comes along with it." 

## 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).





Our Future Workforce/RCWPRI.org

# RCWP UPDATE

## BIG makes RCWP a preferred charity

Congratulations to the Builders Insurance Group (BIG) on being chosen for the Beacon Mutual Insurance Co. Lighthouse Award for Agency Excellence!

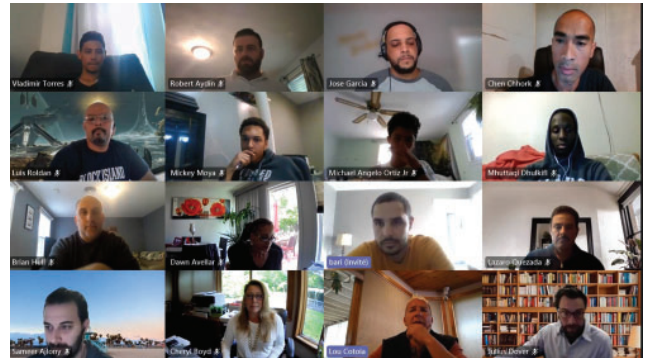
In addition, we at the Residential Construction Workforce Partnership (RCWP) are honored that BIG has chosen us as their charity of choice.

"We appreciate BIG's acknowledgment of and support for RCWP's mission," said RIBA Director of Workforce Programs Cheryl Boyd. "Together with support from industry leaders such as BIG, we can accomplish great things for communities in Rhode Island. Thank you on behalf of our entire team for the recognition."

RCWP is the free employer source for new and upskilled workers in the home building and remodeling industries. As residential construction continues to boom in southeastern New England, we need more skilled labor. Employers are interested not only in new workers but in upskilling current ones.

At the same time, many people in the labor force are thinking  
*see RCWP...next page*

### *VESL classes are ongoing!*



**The latest Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) basic carpentry class began in June. Graduates are available for hiring! Contact Betty Bernal at (401) 500-9146 or [bbernal@ribuilders.org](mailto:bbernal@ribuilders.org) for details.**



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## AIR...from page 16

demics. An ERV will also transfer some of the moisture, keeping humidity out in the summer and in during the winter.

The IECC 2015 model code recognizes the importance of ventilation. Item R403.6 of the Energy Code points to item 401.2 of the Mechanical Code which states:

"Where the air infiltration rate in a dwelling unit is less than five air changes per hour, the dwelling unit shall be ventilated by mechanical means."


Rhode Island is currently on the IECC 2015, but with several weakening amendments. One of those amendments changes the language in a way that effectively changes mechanical ventilation from mandatory to voluntary. Instead of pointing to item 401.2 in the Mechanical Code, it points to Section M1507:

"Where local exhaust or whole-house mechanical ventilation is provided, the equipment shall be designed in accordance with this section".

Why has this important piece of code, which in most cases can be satisfied for less than \$100, been modified? Whom does this benefit?

Although many of our neighboring states, including Massachusetts and Connecticut, require an air tightness of three air changes per hour, the air tightness requirement in Rhode Island is still at six air changes per hour. But that changes on Jan. 1, 2022 - to five air changes per hour.

Since five air changes is the IECC threshold for the mechanical ventilation requirement, does this mean the language requiring mechanical ventilation will also change? Let's hope so. Because homes don't need to breathe, people do.

For assistance with meeting the Energy Code, contact National Grid's Energy Code Support Program at (855) 343-0105. 

## RCWP...from previous page


about changing careers. And, as COVID-19 restrictions gradually lift and more people are vaccinated, still others are planning a return to the workforce.

To meet the labor issue from all these angles, the Rhode Island Builders Association has expanded its workforce development programs through RCWP.

Thanks to funding from the Real Jobs Rhode Island program, classes are free of charge for employers and potential employees. Visit [RCWPri.org](http://RCWPri.org).

"We remind employers that we have students from our programs ready to hire for carpentry, electrical and plumbing/HVACR.," Ms. Boyd stated.

Employers can also post their job openings at [RCWPJobs.com](http://RCWPJobs.com).

"We are in the process of interviewing students for the Fall training programs, if anyone is interested in applying they should do so quickly at [rcwpri.org](http://rcwpri.org)," she added. 

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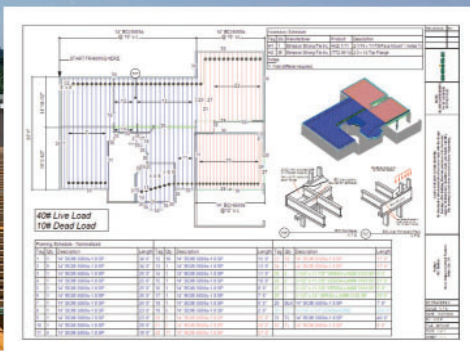
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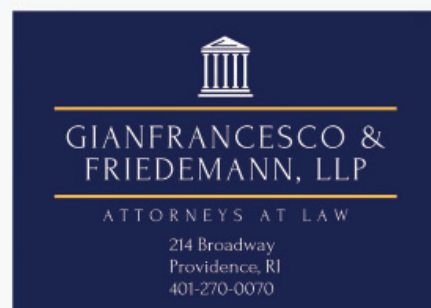
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