

MINUTES OF THE
MARICOPA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
BUILDING CODES COMMITTEE

July 16, 2003
Maricopa Association of Governments Office
Cholla Room
Phoenix, Arizona

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ken Sowers, Avondale
Phil Marcotte, Buckeye
Mike Tibbett, Carefree
Bob Lee, Cave Creek
A - Alex Banachowski, Chandler
Jeff Sterling, El Mirage
*Unappointed, Fountain Hills
*Unappointed, Gila Bend
Rick Usery, for JoRene DeVeau Gila
River Indian Community
A - Ray Patten, Gilbert
Bill Griffith, for Deborah Mazoyer
Glendale
Steve Burger, Goodyear
Chuck Ransom, Litchfield Park

V - Armando Rivas, Paradise Valley
David Nakagawara, Peoria
Joe MacElvaney, for Rick Doell Phoenix
Tim Wegner, Queen Creek
*David Potter, Scottsdale
*Forrest Fielder, Surprise
A - Michael Williams, Tempe
Mario Rochin, Tolleson
*Skip Blunt, Wickenburg
Bob Cooperider, Youngtown
Tom Ewers, Maricopa County
Rus Brock, Home Builders Association
*Orion Goff, Mesa

*Those members neither present nor represented by proxy.
A-Those members participating via audioconference
V-Those members participating via videoconference

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Michelle Green, MAG
Constance Kish, MAG

David Cassidy
Philip D. Camp

1. Call to Order

The chair called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

2. Introductions

Members of the Committee introduced themselves.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes for June 18, 2003

Ken Sowers moved to accept the minutes and Mario Rochin seconded the motion. Mr. Lee asked if there were any comments prior to taking a vote. Tim Wegner noted that on page 3, fifth sentence down, the word lab should read as lav instead of lab. Rus Brock also noted that on page 4 it should read that Rus asked what the cost increase would be and one of the presenters answered with 50 to 75% increase. A roll call vote was taken and the motion to approve the minutes as amended passed unanimously.

4. Call to the Public

Tim Wegner provided an update on the issue of service sinks. He said that he called the ICC and was advised that one is acceptable if it is open to all occupants at one time.

5. AIA and Building Code Officials

Mr. Brian Cassidy, president of the Board of Directors for the Arizona Institute of Architects, began his presentation by thanking the committee for the opportunity to present to them.

He then provided some background on his organization stating that there is a national organization called the American Institute of Architects. The association, he explained, has almost 300 state and local chapters representing 60,000 members. He then noted that there are 1,100 members in Arizona, which represents approximately 40% of registered Architects in the State. He also added that the national membership reflects approximately 50% of registered Architects in the nation. He said that difference between national and local participation is a result of people being registered in more than one State. Mr. Cassidy then informed the group that 85% of members live in Maricopa County. For this reason, the Central Arizona Chapter has 3 subsections, West, Central Phoenix, and Scottsdale. This provides better representation he explained.

Mr. Cassidy then went on to explain that he works for a medium size firm of 18 people, which means the firm typically works on medium size projects. Mr. Cassidy noted that there are niche markets developing because firms are becoming specialized.

He then went on to explain that architects are represented on State Technical Boards allowing them to participate in areas that will affect how they do their job. He stated that this kind of participation benefits all parties.

Continuing education, he explained, is an important part of being a member. It is important to stay educated on current practice in this quickly changing environment.

He then began to discuss the fact that Architects in Arizona and in Maricopa County specifically have to deal with over 25 jurisdictions when getting projects permitted. He said, gone are the days when you could just walk in and pull a permit. The point here he said is that the process has become more complex with a lot more people involved in it. This, he explained, makes communication among participants in the process key.

Mr. Cassidy then indicated that Architects would like to be better stewards by participating in creating a better, built environment and support improved health, safety and welfare but they would also like to help improve the process as well. The AIA, he said, are supportive of the green building movement that is gaining momentum.

Mr. Cassidy then moved the discussion to building codes. The AIA, he explained has been working for 25 years towards having a national building code. He said that the AIA are currently participating in the development of the NFPA 5000 code. The position of the Association, he explained is to have one code nationwide.

Mr. Cassidy then went on to explain that the information cities provide on websites is invaluable and that the move toward more digital formats is a benefit from their perspective.

Mr. Cassidy then discussed some of the issues that Architects have with plan review as follows:

1. People in cities are overworked and do not have the time they need to devote to the plan review process.
2. It can be difficult to get a code interpretation until you have paid a fee.
3. Outsourcing plan review is, from the AIA's perspective not a good thing.
4. Third review of plans is costly in terms of time and money, especially when comments come in that should have come in through the first or second review even. There have been cases where architects are charged an additional fee for this review.
5. Individual homeowners seem to have preference over professionals. The association would like reviewers to be as thorough with non-professionals as they are with others.

Mr. Cassidy then went on to say that Architects are under a lot of pressure from clients to perform and get through the review process as quickly as possible. Clients, he said, often don't understand the issues with plan reviews.

Mr. Cassidy then said that electronic plan review is very helpful and is coming. Soon most of the work will be done on-line.

In closing Mr. Cassidy said that the AIA would like to be good stewards and work with building officials to create a better, built environment.

Tom then asked about the State issues related to not having the ability to redline documents with a seal. He indicated that Architects themselves often insist on reprinting a final set of drawings.

Mr. Cassidy said that he does not have a complete answer for that question but he indicated that several groups are working on software that will result in a final digital document that is unchangeable and this he says, will improve the process greatly.

Steve then discussed communication in the plan review process. He explained that there are several consultants involved, 1-2 plans examiners and 28 Cities or Towns. If Architects have questions, they should feel free to ask them. With respect to a third review, he said, sometimes we ask for an additional door but the drawings show up with no exit sign for that door. Sure, these things cause delays in the planning process but in the end, it saves time in the field. Mr. Burger then added that communication is a critical part of the process.

Tim Wegner added that if anyone has difficulty contacting the plan reviewer then they should contact the Building official.

Tom interjected that e-mail may be the best way to do that because the volume of calls is getting overwhelming.

David asked how Brian sees the role of architects changing in the future with planners and engineers becoming involved.

Brian said that he sees the Architect as more of the point person on a project because they are becoming more specialized and managing more projects. Brian indicated that the Architect should be the point person.

David then asked how much of an issue stepping on toes is.

Brian asked if the question referred to single-family construction.

David responded by saying commercial

Brian said that there really is more of a problem between interior designers and architects.

Bill Griffiths indicated that Brian may be able to help building officials help architects. The issue, Bill explained, is that the Technical Board requires a seal on plans and then does not allow sealed plans to be distributed with redlines.

Bob noted that the architects themselves would rather print out a new finalized set of drawings, presumably to avoid confusion. Bob also added that Building Officials should make the code interpretations more available

6. Soil Types and Conditions in Arizona

The chair introduced Phillip Camp, a State Soil Scientist for the USDA. Mr. Camp explained that the purpose of his presentation was to provide information and explain how committee members can access the information available.

Mr. Camp said that the soils in Arizona are highly variable and complex. The reason for having a detailed inventory of soils, he explained, is the “dustbowl” of the 30’s, although one of the first soil surveys was done in the Salt River Valley in 1902.

Currently, he said, the documentation is known as the National Cooperative Soil Survey. He indicated that all lands in Maricopa County have coverage. Mr. Camp then explained that they have a staff of 20 with offices located in Tucson. He continued by adding that his department currently has seven major mapping projects underway.

What do soil surveys do, he asked? He answered by stating that they are useful for construction, for determining what the limitations of the soils are or might be. He then went on to explain their method for conducting an inventory, which involves sending out field crew to do sampling by boring. Sometimes, he explained, they need to call in specialists from the National Lab.

He added that the soil survey reports are available to the public at no cost, they are available in digital format from the National website for download or they will mail them upon request.

Mr. Camp also offered a workshop explaining GIS and the software that they use. He cautioned that some people have taken their data and manipulated it so that it may not be a true reflection of soil condition. How the data is used, he explained is a function of what it is being used for, different uses require different levels of accuracy. He recommended that people requiring data obtain it directly from the agency.

Bob mentioned plotting soils maps over zoning maps as an interesting exercise and referred to IBC Section 1802.2 and IRC Section R401.4.

Steve asked how people could obtain the kind of maps that were presented at the meeting today.

Mr. Camp said that committee members could contact Eric Wolfbrandt at 602-280-8822 to obtain the mapping shown here today.

Bill asked if they do site specific investigations. Mr. Camp indicated that that is not really possible with the staff. He also added that they are updating information constantly.

Tim asked about Fissures, specifically if the Tucson office has information on them. Phil said that they are not as problematic as you might think, he said that we have one in one subdivision in Pinal County but it is really USGS that is monitoring those. Mr. Camp said that we probably see more of them because of the field visits that we make. He stated that we are finding more and more of them mostly due to drought as in addition to overdrawing on the aquifer.

Mr. Lee thanked Mr Camps for his presentation stating that it was very helpful.

7. Permits Issued by Private Entities for Water Heaters.

Bob introduced this topic by explaining that he was told by Home Depot that, based on area code, Home Depot charges a permit fee and then they send the fee to a jurisdiction that would then do an inspection and issue a permit. Bob explained that this seemed peculiar to him and asked if anyone had any input.

Bill indicated that they may be going through a private company for the permitting service.

Mario said that they do not inspect them that way, people need to come in and request a permit.

Tom indicated that it is not happening in Maricopa County. They have received no fees to date.

Mike Tibbet said that he did receive a call about 7 or 8 months ago asking if they did permitting. Sears and Home Depot as far as he knows are doing it. He also added that out of the 10 permits they have issued, they have only received money for three. They expect that the others will come in.

Bill suggested that it might be a good idea to collect the money once a month.

Mike indicated that he had a meeting with AZ plumbing and they were told at that time that Phoenix does not like permits

8. Update on Activities of the Building Inspectors and Plans Examiners Forum

Bob indicated that the committee is continuing to meet and that their focus is now on discrepancies in calculating wire size. The forum will attempt to develop an approach that allows them to be consistent.

He also indicated that they are doing more research on soil compaction. Bob also noted that there is some dissention among the group on the fireblocking issue with respect to whether or not it should be caulked or fireblocked.

9. Update on the State Plumbing Commission

Bob raised the issue of whether or not we needed to keep this item on the agenda as Steve indicated that there would probably be no action on this Commission until November. Steve indicated that it could remain on the agenda and said that there was no action yesterday and that he had attempted to talk to the Chair Brian Townsend unsuccessfully.

10. Update Survey of Code Adoption

Bob Lee asked if everyone at the meeting had a chance to look over the list of codes that each member agency is currently using and make any corrections they felt necessary. There were no changes noted to the Survey of Code Adoption this month.

11. Updated MAG Building Codes Committee Membership

The Membership roster was circulated with the agenda for this meeting and no changes were noted.

12. Topics for Future Agendas

Bob indicated that David Eisenberg, Director of the Development Center for Appropriate Technology would speak at the next meeting regarding sustainable building practices.

13. Adjournment

The next meeting will be held on August 13, 2003 at 2 pm in the Cholla Room. Bob made the motion to adjourn, Mario Rochin seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm.