

Wally Staples
Wally J Staples Builders, Inc
LD 1226

Being a Building Contractor along the Southern Midcoast of Maine for over 30 Years my experience has been that there are far more honest, fair and excellent craftsman building and renovating in Maine, than not. Unfortunately, as in any industry there is the rare exception and with the large investment homeowners make in building a new home or completing a renovation, when a contractor fails to complete a project, or there is poor workmanship it really stands out.

Licensing for contractors would create guardrails to help prevent the unfortunate cases noted above. I believe it would also create accountability as well as credibility.

I think it should be considered to have a system where licensing ties directly to the business owners Social Security number, not an EIN number. This would help prevent a failed contractor who loses their license from just starting another business with a new EIN # under a new name.

In an ideal, there would be a licensing system that covers different areas of expertise. Example license #1: General Contractors license that would cover new homes, renovations, and any other type of project related to residential construction.

(Anything that requires a building permit would require a GC license)

Example license #2: Home Improvement Contractors license that would cover replacement type projects like roofing, windows, siding decking, etc. and some light renovation that does not include overseeing sub-contractors. (To oversee sub-contractors and build new structures like homes and additions and complete larger more in-depth renovations a General Contractors license would be needed)

There likely needs to be some grandfathering initially to get a licensing system in place, but ultimately the process should require proof of Insurance, some type of basic written exam (different requirements for a General Contractors license VS. a Home Improvement license) and continuing education credits, to obtain and renew a contractor's license.

The assumption would be that the Town Codes Department would require that a contractor list their license on a building permit application (similar to plumbers and electricians) Something that could be considered as part of the goal of making sure contractors have the needed insurance in place, would be to require that the contractors insurance company send a Certificate of insurance directly to the codes office, before the permit is issued. This is outside of licensing, but insurance is an issue in the industry as well.

We need to start somewhere, but a model that I feel would be great to consider now, or in the future would be that of Plumbers & Electricians where there is a Journeyman's and Master License. In the building world we have Lead Carpenters who are a working foreman on a job, and they could have a Master Carpenters license. The Carpenters on a job would have a Carpenters Journeyman's license. This would help create a higher trained and skilled workforce and also bring the opportunity to charge an hourly rate for a Carpenter more in line with a Plumber or Electrician. This would allow contractors to pay a higher wage to employees, and quite likely attract more folks into the carpentry field.

Not everyone is destined to go to college and obtain a college degree. If the carpenters had an opportunity to earn a license, this would be an earned degree in some sense, that would more than likely attract and keep folks in the industry as a career.

The goal of licensing should not be to discourage people from considering becoming a contractor in Maine, but the opposite. And if a licensing system is done well, it could actually help attract and maintain the best people in the industry.

I have had the opportunity to build for some of the finest clients right along the Midcoast of Maine. And to do that my company has been blessed to employ some of the most talented and hardworking craftsman who I feel our industry can do better by,

and having the credibility of licensing I believe can help with that goal.

Thanks

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21 Greenwood Rd.

Brunswick, Me