

**Meeting Minutes  
Construction Trades Board  
Caroline County, Maryland**

**DATE:** Wednesday January 19, 2022

**PLACE:** Health & Public Services Building  
403 S. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, 1st Floor, Room 111  
Denton, Maryland 21629

**BOARD MEMBERS:** W. Eric Smith, Chairman  
Michael Mann Sr., Vice Chairman  
Earl R. Kitchen, Jr.  
Chuck Dean  
Scott Veil  
Scott Holden  
Levi Hayman

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Crystal Dadds, Assistant Codes Director  
Stewart Barroll, County Attorney  
Kendra Blake, Board Administrative Assistant

At 2:03 PM, Chairman Smith called the meeting of the Caroline County Construction Trades Board to order.

**NEW BUSINESS**

The agenda was amended to elect chairman and vice chairman for the Board.

**Motion:** Mr. Mann made a motion to elect Mr. W. Eric Smith to continue as the Chairman.  
**Second:** Mr. Kitchen seconded the motion.  
**Vote:** The motion was approved unanimously (6-0).

**Motion:** Mr. Kitchen made a motion to elect Mr. Mann to continue as the Vice Chairman.  
**Second:** Mr. Holden seconded the motion.  
**Vote:** The motion was approved unanimously (6-0).

A homeowner complaint had been received by Mr. Hayman for 10997 Fair Lane, Ridgely, MD regarding the new dwelling under construction by a contractor who was not a valid Maryland Home Builder Registration License (MHBR) holder. Ms. Dadds noted that there were several errors on the customer contract, which the homeowner admitted that she did not review upon hiring Mr. James Hooper to complete the work, she chose the affordable price for the work. Mr. James listed West & Callahan, Inc., as the builder on the permit; however, he himself was actually completing the work, unlicensed. West & Callahan, Inc., was not aware that Mr. Hooper had listed their business as the building contractor. Mr. Callahan informed Ms. Dadds that he had previously hired Mr. Hooper as manager on a project but was not aware that Mr. Hooper was not licensed. Ms. Dadds stated that because the building contractor's signature is not required on a permit application, it was convenient for Mr. Hooper to falsify documents. Mr. Smith stated that Mr.

West & Callahan. Ms. Dadds had spoken to both the property owner as well as Mr. Callahan of West & Callahan, Inc., encouraging them both to contact the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to file a complaint. The homeowner was advised by OAG to stop all work and not offer any further draws from Queenstown Bank on their construction loan. Queenstown Bank was scheduled to meet Mr. Hooper on site to determine how much it would cost to finish the project. The homeowners expressed deep concern for payment issues, they also learned that the subcontractors had not been paid for their work and will not work with Mr. Hooper. Queenstown Bank advised the homeowners to apply for the building permit so that the work could be completed. West & Callahan offered to complete the work; however, the homeowners would need to sever ties with Mr. Hooper before it would be finished. Ms. Dadds stated that she would contact the bank to find out who was listed as the building contractor when the homeowner applied for the construction loan.

The building permit had been issued on June 8, 2021 with building inspections being completed and approved through the insulation inspection. Mr. Hayman stated that the framing work and drywall all around looked to be done to code. There were also several concerns regarding the sprinkler system that had been installed. Mr. Hayman stated that the homeowner contacted him, questioning the insulation work that had been completed, stating that bubble wrap was used for insulation, and nothing had been sealed. Ms. Dadds informed the Board that First State Inspection Agency was advised not to complete any further inspections. The homeowner informed Ms. Dadds that she would pay for a private inspection of the HVAC system as of the meeting date. Mr. Kitchen asked Mr. Hayman the status of the duct work on the project. Mr. Hayman responded stating that it was not up to code. Ms. Dadds stated that the County needs to have HVAC inspections completed for building permits, the Board agreed. After brief discussion, the Board was not opposed to requesting getting on the County Commissioners meeting agenda to discuss adding HVAC inspections to building permits.

Mr. Hooper had also applied for a plumbing permit, listing JW Shepherd Plumbing licensed contractor who confirmed that he did not perform the work. Joshua Shepherd had spoken to Ms. Dadds and informed her that he recalled his conversation with Mr. Hooper months prior, Mr. Hooper asked for his license number. It was unclear who actually completed the plumbing work for that job.

Ms. Dadds informed the Board that this was not a building code issue, but a licensed contractor issue, by which the Board had the authority to revoke or rescind the building permit. Mr. Barroll stated because the issues were made aware of, the permit was now voided, and a licensed contractor would need to reapply for the permit. Ms. Dadds stated that this was not the first time that Mr. Hooper did construction work without a license. Mr. Kitchen stated that this type of incident happened to a property owner in Queen Anne's County, previously. Mr. Barroll stated that this matter needed to be publicized to prevent others from being victimized.

Ms. Dadds stated that the investigator at the OAG's office stated that there would be significant fines, MHBR bonding as well as other difficulties imposed for Mr. Hooper to obtain a building contractor's license. Mr. Barroll stated that there were multiple ways to institute criminal charges against Mr. Hooper with the County's help. Mr. Veil stated that Sheriff Baker should be contacted and made aware of the situation; however, the homeowners will also need to do their part. Mr. Barroll also stated that a Judge could order restitution to be paid, but criminal prosecution would be sought by the OAG.

Ms. Dadds stated that the Codes Enforcement officer would post a stop work order and take photos onsite since the permit was invalid. Ms. Dadds had spoken to Mr. Hooper making him aware that the permit would be revoked. The homeowners could reapply as the general contractor to complete

the work with the exception of a master electrician being required on the permit. Ms. Dadds stated that homeowners can apply for building permits; however, there would be no recourse through Maryland Home Builder Registration if the unlicensed contractor receives payment and does not complete the work.

As the meeting concluded, the Board was in agreeance of the following:

- The building permit no. 2104-0033 was no longer valid as of the meeting date.
- The Codes Enforcement Officer would post a stop work order on site and contact the Sherriff's office regarding what had been uncovered.
- The homeowner would be encouraged to follow through with Office of the Attorney General and the Sherriff's Office to file a complaint against Mr. James Hooper.
- The homeowner would need to decide to reapply for the permit as the general contractor or hire a new licensed building contractor to complete the work.
- The Board would like to meet with the County Commissioners regarding the need of HVAC inspections being completed.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

According to an email that Mr. Smith received from State Senator, Addie Eckardt, the amendment had not been drafted. The Fall proposal may not take place until the 2022 legislative session.

He went on to say that some counties were requiring electricians to complete a registration process; however, some counties do not require registration at this time. Ms. Dadds stated that Caroline County is not requiring registration at this time, only master licensed electricians are permitted to apply for electric inspections.

There were no further comments from the Board.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion:** Mr. Mann made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:33 p.m.

**Second:** Mr. Hayman seconded the motion.

**Vote:** The motion was approved unanimously (6-0).

### **CONSTRUCTION TRADES BOARD**

**Eric Smith, Chairman**



Minutes prepared by:

Kendra Blake, Board Administrative Assistant