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Springfield Bulletin
Bill Ward
March 16, 2007

It was a tough week in Springfield, to say the least, as bills detrimental to the housing industry were passing initial committee stages and moving into a position to be considered by the full bodies of the House and Senate. Here are my end-of-the-week bullets.

- Let's start with the good news. Our bill, SB1508, requires fire protection districts to gain approval of their fire protection codes by the county board before they may be enforced in unincorporated areas of the county. In the face of strong opposition by the fire protection districts, Senator Maggie Crotty (D-Oak Forest) brought home a 10-0 unanimous vote and has sent the bill to the Senate floor for further consideration. Mark Perlman, President of Empeco Custom Builders and member of the HBA of Greater Chicago, testified to the Senate Local Committee explaining the difficulties he had with the fire protection codes in Lake County. A meeting on the bill with fire protection officials will be held today in Senator Crotty's district office to further address their concerns.
- A bill creating a five-year freeze on the development of property that has been disconnected from a municipality passed the same Local Government Committee. SB1493 is being pushed by officials from Barrington Hills who had a developer disconnect his property from the village because he did not agree to building to a 5-acre minimum lot size. The good news is that the bill's sponsor, Senator Pam Althoff (R-Crystal Lake) agreed to hold the bill at the request of the committee until an agreed amendment could be arranged between us, the Illinois Assoc. of Realtor, and the proponents. While we will review any changes or amendments that might be proposed, HBAI has philosophically opposed these kinds of measures for years and will remain so with consideration to SB1493.
- The licensing of contractors who paint, perform glasswork, or drywall passed the Senate Licensed Activities Committee but with the same caveat as the previous bill that an agreement must be met between the Painters Union and the International Laborers Union before the bill could go forward. HBAI and the Chicago Carpenters Union join the Laborers in opposition and will continue to oppose this form of licensure. SB155 is sponsored by Senator Terry Link (D-Vernon Hills).
- SB1184 is an omnibus energy conservation bill which has provisions requiring the use of the 2006 IRC Energy Efficiency Code for all new construction in Illinois. Enactment of the 2006 EEC is very popular with the legislators as they look for proposals to address the huge utility rate hikes being experienced due to utility rate deregulation. To add insult to injury, the utility companies are proponents of the bill. HBAI is working with the bill's sponsor, Senator Don Harmon (D-Oak Park) to add language allowing us to work with the Capital Development Board to amend the code before its enactment.
- HB1842, sponsored by Rep. Julie Hamos (D-Evanston), goes beyond SB1184 in that it endorses futures EECs produced through the IRC. The bill accepts the most recently enacted code as the law of the land in Illinois. This bill received bi-partisan support in the House Environment & Energy Committee and is now on 2nd Reading in the House.
- HB474, sponsored by Rep. Jack Franks (D-Woodstock), initiates Residential Contractor Licensure in Illinois. The bill was held in the House Registration and Regulation Committee at our request but members want us to draft language that would address the constant complaints their constituents have with fly-by-nighters. Committee Chair, Rep. Skip Saviano (R-Elmwood Park), who is in opposition of the bill, has asked us to draft language that would mandate all contractors who had gross receipts of less than \$200,000 in the previous calendar year to register with the unit of local government where they are working and provide the municipality with a surety bond. In the meantime, Rep. Franks plans to grandstand this issue by inviting CBS Chicago Channel 2 reporter, Pam Zeckman, to testify on his bill next week. She did a lengthy report last year on felonious contractors who are still operating outside the law regardless of their actions against unknowing consumers. More to follow.
- HB1950, sponsored by Rep. Don Moffitt (R-Gilson), attempts to place the administrative rules of the Fire Prevention Safety Act within the state statutes. The bill, however, differs from the rules as it does not include an exemption for 1 and 2 family units and an exemption for existing housing. Rep. Moffitt has agreed to place those exemptions in the bill at our request.

- The Employee Classification Act passed through the House Labor Committee Wednesday receiving bi-partisan support. HB1795, sponsored by Rep. Harry Osterman (D-Chicago), enacts many of the same measures that were in last year's bill. A proponent for the bill testified that he had met with over 20 builders groups last summer to come up with a consensus bill. Debate was limited to one proponent and one opponent. Even though the State Chamber of Commerce provided excellent testimony, we were unable to address our issues to the committee.
- HB743 creates the Contractor Prompt Payment Act sponsored by Rep. John Fritchey (D-Chicago). HBAI and several other groups oppose the measure which sets up payment dates that would be too fast for inspections to be made before funds were dispensed from escrow accounts. The bill passed the House and it will be some time before action is taken on this initiative in the Senate. In the meantime, a coalition of residential and commercial builders along with title companies is being formed to oppose the measure which will be sponsored by Senator John Cullerton (D-Chicago) in the Senate.

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