Teleconference – Residential Sprinkler Task Group December 20, 2012

Draft Meeting Minutes

In attendance:

Steven McDaniel

John Hofelich

Ann Marie Mitchell

Dominick Kasamauskas

Julius Ballanco,

David Kaufmann

Timothy DeRuyscher

Staff:

Ray Andrews,

Miriam McGiver,

Jonathan Worden

Catherine Karp

Ray stated that the public was welcome to call in and listen but only the Task Group members were to actively take part in the meeting.

The Code Council will be meeting on Feb. 13, 2013 and in order to keep to the schedule for code adoption set by the Governor's Office, the Sprinkler Task Force recommendations were to be presented to the Code Council at that meeting.

Ray explained that this was the same group of people that made up the original Residential Sprinkler Committee that created a report dated June 19, 2009, with the exception of Ann Marie Mitchell, who is new. The group worked well together originally, came to consensus and had good insights and he knew they would continue to do so with these meetings. The group was formed after the 2010 Residential Code of New York State was approved. It did not include the appendix which contained residential sprinklers. Now the 2009 and 2012 ICC codes contain requirements for residential sprinklers, so input was requested for the next version of the Residential Code of New York State.

Ray mentioned that there are two methods for meeting sprinkler requirements in the ICC Residential Code – using NFPA 13D or the plumbing method in Section 2904. The ICC code text has a flaw in regard to New York State – separated townhouses only allow the plumbing method, not 13D.

The group decided on dates and times for the next two meetings – Jan. 7 from 10 am -noon and Jan. 17 at the same time.

If anyone was interested there is a website that has at least one hundred articles about communities adopting sprinklers. http://www.noburn.com/news/residential-sprinkler-mandate

Dominic – the state of Maryland has required residential sprinklers for two years (except for 4 rural counties that have not adopted the code).

Tim asked what the primary focus of these three meetings is. Ray replied that the group should look at the ICC code requirements and provide recommendations or insights on residential sprinklers to the Code Council, who will make the final decision on the issue. There will be no chair and staff will assist. He also stated that the group is not evenly divided among interest groups. Ray believes the group should work towards a consensus and not focus on a vote.

John asked for more time to come up with recommendations. Ray explained that there is a deadline of Feb. 13 and it cannot be put off.

Julius responded to the issue of a "flaw" and explained how the ICC townhouse sprinkler language came about because of sprinkler fitters and licensed plumbers. Ray responded that it doesn't work in NY because the text is specific and many code officials will keep to the text, so it would have to be modified if adopted in NY.

Julius thought the California sprinkler experience would be of value for NY to look into. He also mentioned a FEMA sprinkler coalition and will e-mail their educational program and video for the group to see. Ann Marie requested CA stats how sprinklers affected the homebuilding industry.

Ray brought up the idea of requiring sprinklers in large homes as a way of introducing residential sprinklers in NY. Steve did not agree because the sizing of larger residential systems is more expensive per square foot than small houses. Dominic said MA had a requirement for sprinklers for houses of 14,400 s.f. or more. Groups in MA have wanted to lower the square footage to 6,000 s.f for several years, but that hasn't passed.

John was of the opinion that the homeowner should make the decision to install sprinklers. He also suggested added smoke detection in garages, basements and attics. Ray stated that homeowners seem to not want sprinklers. Dominic said education and marketing affects homeowners' opinions.

Tim said the Building Code Subcommittee was of the opinion that the ICC code should not be changed by NY unless there is a compelling reason. There was also an issue of R-3 and I occupancies with up to

five residents regulated by the Building Code being required to have sprinklers if they were required by the Residential Code and not if the Residential Code does not require it.

Ray talked about the bill in the NY Legislature that would prohibit the sprinklering of residential buildings. He said the bill language was flawed because 3 story one and two family homes are now required to be sprinklered. Julius asked why condominiums were required to be sprinklered but not townhouses? He was of the opinion that only requiring sprinklering of large homes was just protecting the rich, which wasn't appropriate. Ray said that idea was in response to the legislation citing affordability as the reason to prohibit sprinklers. He mentioned that in NY there are communities that require sprinklers via More Restrictive Local Standards and they are all wealthy communities. The group in general did not seem to like requiring sprinklers only in larger homes.

There was a concern that requiring sprinklers would trigger sprinklers in existing homes undergoing renovations. Julius cited exception to Section 313.2 of the 2012 IRC which states that existing buildings are exempt from all sprinklering requirements.

Ray asked David what he thought as a person not as involved in sprinklers as some other group members. He responded that the economy is not healthy, there have been layoffs in his company and adding to the cost of buildings is a disincentive to build.

Dominic said California had a smooth transition to sprinklers required in new homes and prices did not go up. He explained that that state had a two year ramp up so people knew it was coming. That process began four years ago. Ann Marie asked for statistics. John said he has access to that information which he will provide to the group. There was discussion of NY having a time delay before sprinklers were required in NY. Ray said that was possible.

John asked for a straw poll of the group. Ray thought this was premature. He also noted the Task Group was not established to be balanced pro and con. It was unclear what the group may produce for the Code Council – recommendations or positives and negatives if residential sprinklers are required.

John said cost isn't the issue. It is having sprinklers mandated, which should be a homeowners choice. He was also concerned about installation, freezing of pipes and warranties.

Julius brought up FEMA's program of encouraging sprinkler installations by homeowners, with recommendations that the work could be done without professional designers. Ray didn't think that idea would work in NY because of the State Education Law requiring design professionals.

Ann Marie had technical questions about installing sprinklers in timber frame residences, such as how spray foam insulation would lock sprinkler pipes within an assembly where future access would be very difficult. Julius said he had insulation information in spreadsheet form that he would share with the group.

Ray offered to be the source of documents that people wanted to share. If people send him the information he will distribute it. He said he would also send the group each other's e-mail addresses

and phone numbers. He cautioned against decisions being made by group members contacting one another, as this would not meet the requirements of the Open Meetings Law. He said NFPA will also be supplying the latest NFPA 13 and 13D standards and comparisons. Ann Marie said she will provide technical questions she has.

Ray thanked all for their time, especially so near the holidays.