

Moves to limit regulation gather momentum in R.I.

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

There is support among Rhode Island legislators for a single statewide standard for wetlands and septic system regulations.

That's the word from Gary S. Ezovski PE, a civil engineer for the last 40 years and a speaker at the recent economic summit for the state House of Representatives, held at Rhode Island College (RIC) on January 17th.

"It didn't take long for me to hear from three representatives who said they would like to see a statewide regulation...see EZOVSKI...page 21



Gary Ezovski

Photo courtesy: Justin Keitz, OceanStateCurrent.com



Business and economic leaders such as Gary Ezovski are calling for a consistent statewide set of environmental regulations in Rhode Island. This story highlights Mr. Ezovski's comments at a recent economic summit for state lawmakers and in a subsequent interview with our magazine.

**-Executive Director
John Marcantonio**

Coming soon: RIBA Member Benefit Guide

Now in preparation for members and potential members of the Rhode Island Builders Association is the 2013 *Member Benefit Guide*. Four pages longer than the 2012 edition, the *Guide* will include a schedule of RIBA classes and seminars, along with complete information on member discounts, rebates and marketing opportunities.

Page 11

RIBA offers Home Show class

Take advantage of a last-minute opportunity: Learn how to use RIBA's 2013 Home Show to benefit your business. Show Director Robert Yoffe will present a workshop for current and potential exhibitors at RIBA headquarters on February 21st. It is not too late to become an exhibitor.

Page 7

Mass. announces license renewal requirements

If you are a licensed construction supervisor in Massachusetts, you must prove that you have fulfilled your continuing education requirements before your renewal date. Courses are being offered in Worcester and Quincy.

Page 11

How to fix Rhode Island

The Rhode Island Builder Report gets an earful from nationally acclaimed housing economist Elliot Eisenberg on what our state leaders must do to help fix the housing market. See page 16.



From the Board of Directors

Membership applications on the rise

By Paul F. Eno Editor

Rising interest in belonging to the Rhode Island Builders Association was one of the topics for discussion at the February 5th meeting of the association's Board of Directors. Five new members were voted in during the meeting (see page 3), and Executive Di-



At the February 5th Board of Directors meeting, Remodelers Committee Chairman Dean Martineau, left, reviews events that are expected to help bring in new members. At right is board member Daniel Leonard of Anchor Insulation & Co., Inc.

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builder report

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rector John Marcantonio reported that RIBA's recruiting drive continues.

"Events sponsored by our Remodelers Committee have been a major recruiting tool. Non-members have been actively encouraged to attend these seminars and networking events," Mr. Marcantonio noted.

In his own report, Remodelers Committee Chairman Dean Martineau noted that nearly 40 people attended the RIBA Open House and networking night sponsored by the committee on January 23rd, and that 12 non-members had expressed serious interest in joining. He noted that all members and non-members are invited to the

free marketing seminar the committee is hosting on February 21st (see page 4).

Mr. Marcantonio also reviewed the Legislative Committee agenda, especially restoration of the state's Historic Tax Credit in a way that benefits the industry and the economy.

The Home Show

Volunteers from among RIBA members are needed to help at the Home Show in April, announced Ronald J. Smith, chairman of the Home Show Committee (see page 6).

Mr. Marcantonio noted that the Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape
see BOARD...page 20

DEADLINES FOR THE NEXT ISSUE

For the APRIL issue, all copy, ads and photos must be to us by

MARCH 1

Send material to The R.I. Builder Report, c/o RIBA,
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RIBA welcomes our new members and thanks their sponsors!

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For membership
information, visit www.RIBUILDERS.org or call
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RIBA also thanks these members who renewed in December & January

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inControl, Inc.

LOOKING AHEAD!

♦ **February 21: Cost-Effective Marketing** - 5 to 7 p.m., RIBA headquarters, East Providence. Learn the top 10 most effective, low- or no-cost ways to spread the word about your products and services at this FREE seminar. Bring a non-member to introduce them to RIBA! *Details on page 7.*

♦ **February 21: Home Show Seminar** - 6 p.m., RIBA headquarters, East Providence. Learn how RIBA's Home Show can be your ticket to marketing your business in 2013. Presenter: Robert Yoffe of Yoffe Exhibition Services. *Details on page 7.*

♦ **March 21: IT Seminar, An Evening with Atrion SMB** - 5:30 p.m., RIBA headquarters, East Providence. Learn how to use information technology to ease your everyday workload and grow your business. Sponsored by the RIBA Remodelers Committee. Open to RIBA members only. *Details on page 7.*

April 9: Seminars and Trade Show by Harvey Building Products - Seminars 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Omni Providence Hotel, One West Exchange Street, Providence. Cost: \$50 for four classes. Free Trade Show 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Harvey Building Products, 21 Wellington Road, Lincoln. Register online at www.HARVEYBP.com/pro.

♦ **May 8: Tabletop Networking Night** - 4-8 p.m., Rhodes on the Pawtuxet, One Rhodes Pl., Cranston. Admission FREE. Exhibits and networking of interest to all in the residential construction industry. Members and non-members welcome. Also find out what RIBA has to offer. For table rentals, contact Elizabeth Carpenter at ecarpenter@ribuilders.org or (401) 438-7400.

♦ **August 9: 63rd Annual RIBA Outing and Clambake** - Noon to 7 p.m., Francis Farm, Rehoboth, Mass. *Watch for details.*

**More information, registration and payment for most
RIBA events is available at RIBUILDERS.org**

♦ Indicates a RIBA-sponsored event.

CONTACTING RIBA

Members are encouraged to contact the Rhode Island Builders Association staff at any time for information about their membership and its many benefits, RIBA events and educational opportunities, chances for leadership or to help with the association's legislative advocacy program, or with industry or business-related questions. General information is online at RIBUILDERS.org. RIBA's headquarters is located at 450 Veterans Memorial Parkway, Building # 3, East Providence, RI 02914. Hours are Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Phone: (401) 438-7400, Fax: (401) 438-7446. Here is a list of staff:

John Marcantonio, Executive Director
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Felix A. Carlone

2013 Home Show will be the best ever!

March brings us to the eve of our 2013 Home Show, which promises to be the best ever presented by the Rhode Island Builders Association. Thanks to the hard work of Chairman Ron Smith of Ron Smith Homes and our Home Show Committee, along with Carol O'Donnell of CRM Modular Homes, Bob Yoffe of Yoffe Exposition Services, RIBA Executive Director John Marcantonio and our RIBA staff, the Home Show promises to be big and exciting, with something for everyone.

Watch your mail for free member passes to the Home Show. Then be sure to take advantage of RIBA Member Night on the first night of the show, April 4th, when the passes will admit two. Or use them on any other show day, when they will admit one.

International Builders Show

I was among the RIBA members, and members of the residential construction industry from all over the world, to

attend the International Builders Show and National Association of Home Builders Convention, which ran from January 22nd through 24th at the Las Vegas Convention Center. It was an amazing experience, with exhibitors in over 300 building industry categories and with more than 100 classes and seminars. If you didn't make it this year, and especially if you have never attended an IBS, don't deny yourself this great educational and networking opportunity! Plan to attend next year's event, February 4th through 6th, 2014, in Las Vegas.

The 2013 legislative session

Late February and early March is when things typically get revved up in the General Assembly, and RIBA is there. At this time, most bills have been introduced, and hearings are taking place.

Thanks to our hard-working Legislative Committee (see *PRESIDENT...page 20*)



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The 2013 Home Show

There's still time to become an exhibitor in April

When: Thursday, April 4th through Sunday, April 7th.

Where: Rhode Island Convention Center, Providence

Cost: RIBA tickets will soon be mailed to all members.

These tickets will provide free admission for two to members on Member Night (April 4th), with free admission for one during the rest of the show.

For Information: General information, visit www.RIBAHOMESHOW.com. For exhibitor information, call Yoffe Exposition Services at (800) 963-3395.

The 2013 Home Show is almost here, but it's still not too late for you and your business to get in on the action and this unique annual way to market your business.

This year the Rhode Island Builders Association is making it as easy as possible for you to exhibit. To start, members get 5 percent off the standard exhibitor rates, and if you're a first-time exhibitor or are returning to the show after an

absence, you are eligible for up to a \$500 rebate that you can use toward purchase of a booth display.

RIBA has created this program to help small and large members alike participate in the Home Show.

"We want to make the process of participating in the Home Show as easy as possible so members can experience how the show can help market their businesses," said RIBA Executive Director John Marcantonio. "RIBA is here to assist you so that you don't feel that show participation is a daunting task. We can make it easy for you."

If you are reading this in time, your first step is to attend the Home Show information seminar at RIBA headquarters on February 21st. (See *pages 4 and 7*.)

Anchored by the immensely popular Model Home, this year's Home Show is expected to be better than ever. There will be more new features, the return of many popular seminars and a greater range of exhibitors. If you're a sup-

see HOME SHOW...page 21

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Free marketing seminar is open to all

WHEN: Thursday, February 21st, 6 p.m.
WHERE: RIBA headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pkwy., East Providence
COST: Free
DEADLINE TO REGISTER: February 17th
FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER: Logon to RIBUILDERS.org, click on this event under the "Events Calendar," or contact either Katelyn Lombardi, klombardi@ribuilders.org, or Elizabeth Carpenter, ecarpenter@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

"Cost Effective Marketing" will be the subject as Betty Galligan, founder/president of Newberry Public Relations & Marketing Inc., once again brings her professional insights to the Rhode Island Builders Association's members and guests.

Learn the top 10 most effective, low- or no-cost ways to spread the word about your business, products and services, reinforce your brand and attract customers. The focus is on practical, results-oriented marketing, sales and other proven tactics. This seminar will help you implement big-


budget marketing activities for your business on a shoe-string budget, no matter what the economy.

The evening is sponsored by the RIBA Remodelers Committee. Food and beverages will be served from 5 to 5:30 p.m., and there will be time for networking.

Members: Bring a non-member. All are welcome! 


RIBA offers IT seminar to members in March


WHEN: Thursday, March 21st, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
WHERE: RIBA headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pky #301, East Providence
COST: Free
DEADLINE TO REGISTER: March 18th
FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER: Logon to RIBUILDERS.org, click on this event under the "Events Calendar," or contact either Katelyn Lombardi, klombardi@ribuilders.org, or Elizabeth Carpenter, ecarpenter@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

Learn how to make the most of computers and communications devices in your business in this seminar on information technology (IT). This seminar is open only to members of the Rhode Island Builders Association. 

Learn what the RIBA Home Show can do for you

WHEN: Thursday, February 21st, 5 to 7 p.m.
WHERE: RIBA headquarters, 450 Veterans Memorial Pkwy., East Providence
COST: Free
DEADLINE TO REGISTER: February 17th
FOR INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER: Logon to RIBUILDERS.org, click on this event under the "Events Calendar," or contact either Katelyn Lombardi, klombardi@ribuilders.org, or Elizabeth Carpenter, ecarpenter@ribuilders.org, or call (401) 438-7400.

Learn how to market your business effectively at RIBA's Home Show, and how easy and cost-effective it can be to do so. This seminar will take members through the new incentive programs that will make it easier for them to exhibit and how best to benefit from it. 



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RIBA legislative push for 2013 includes restoring Historic Tax Credit



Steven Carlino

Can we get the Historic Tax Credit restored in Rhode Island? That was one of the important questions facing the Rhode Island Builders Association's Legislative Committee at a busy meeting on January 29th.

We also heard a review of industry-related legislation from our lobbyists, and reports from our friends at Grow Smart Rhode Island (GSRI) and Rhode Island Housing (RIH).

GSRI Executive Director Scott Wolf and Director of Research and Communications John Flaherty both made presentations. Scott outlined current recommendations to have the General Assembly restore the Historic Tax Credit (HTC), something that RIBA, GSRI and other organizations actively support. Gov. Lincoln Chafee's

proposed budget would reinstate the HTC, but with severe competitive limitations that the committee feels would help neither construction employment nor the state economy.

Legislative bills to restore the HTC are being prepared, and RIBA will closely monitor these. Watch for more information from us on this important issue.

The housing bond

Amy Rainone, director of intergovernmental relations for RIH, updated us on matters related to her agency, including the ongoing rule-making and funding process for the \$25 million housing bond issue approved by voters in November.

see **LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE....page 20**



Ed Ladouceur

RIBA's Legislative Committee

Steven Carlino, Co-Chairman
Douglas Lumber, Kitchens & Home Center

Edgar N. Ladouceur, Co-Chairman
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President Felix A. Carlone, Ex Officio
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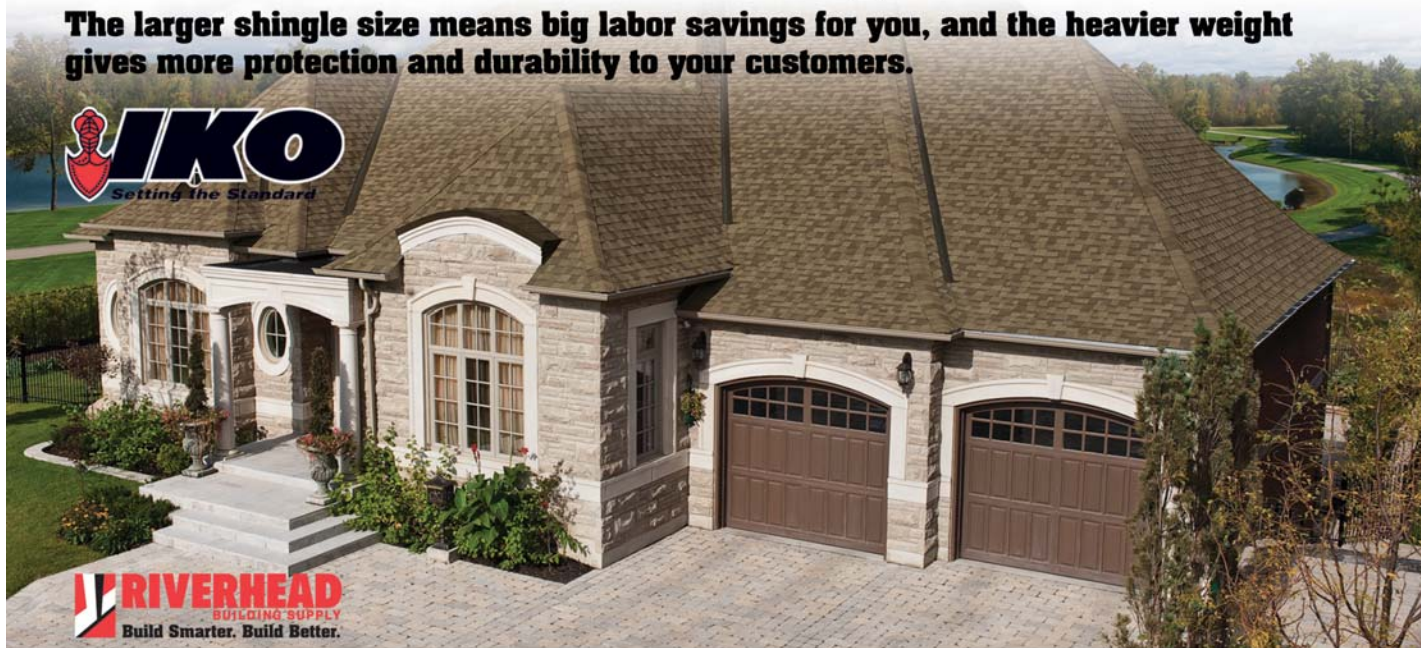
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How to talk to your legislators



Legislation and regulation affect every aspect of your business. RIBA's legislative advocacy is one of our most important member services, but the participation of all members is needed. This story explains one of the most effective ways you can help.
-Executive Director
John Marcantonio

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

The 2013 session of the Rhode Island General Assembly began in January, and it's crucial that *every* Rhode Island Builders Association member get involved on all levels to communicate our industry's point of view in the face of the tough issues facing the residential construction industry. Deficits, over-regulation and inconsistent rules even at the town level, high permit fees and long waits, the need to preserve construction education programs, correcting

our state's business-unfriendly policies and reputation, the increasing need for workforce housing, and encouraging recovery in the still-sluggish housing market all require the direct participation of every member.

These are some suggestions on how to talk with your state senators and representatives.

1. Before you contact your legislators for a phone conversation or meeting, be sure that you yourself are well informed on the issue or issues you plan to discuss. Have your facts straight before you present your case. It won't help your credibility if you blunder through the conversation saying "I think," "maybe," or "I'll have to double check that."

Virtually all the issues facing our industry are complex, and the legislative bills associated with these issues tend to be complex too. But RIBA has resources to help you understand the issues and get them straight. A conversation with RIBA Executive Director John Marcantonio will bring you plenty of backup from the staff and the Legislative Committee.

2. Once you have arranged to speak with your legislators, it's crucial to remember that, whether they know you personally or not, they might know very little about the residential construction industry except from the point of view of anti-growth forces. Particularly when it comes to the nitty-gritty of the construction business, land planning and environmental regulation, you can make the difference between a balanced view and a negative one.

Remember that a lawmaker may have formed no opinion at all on our issues, and may have taken no position on bills of concern to us.

3. When expressing your position on a bill, do so in terms of personal experience. Tell the lawmaker about the contribution your company makes to the local economy and talk about the effect the proposal will have in terms of local jobs, quality of life and the community. That helps illustrate the human side of the effect on your business and on his or her constituents.

Also point out how wide-reaching the effects of a healthy housing market can be, benefiting everything from the local tax base to the suppliers, and from the supporting industries to the utilities and transportation systems. That helps illustrate the importance of your business in the overall economy.

4. Don't monopolize the conversation. Ask the legislator what can be done, and allow him or her to talk.

5. Don't overstate! Don't say things like, "This bill will drive me out of business!" Credibility is the key.

6. Don't challenge or threaten the legislator; attack the bill, not the person.

7. When your conversation or meeting is over, be sure to thank the legislator for his or her valuable time. Follow up later on with an e-mail expressing thanks for their time once again. These are extremely busy people, and all too often they are the targets of concerned or even irate constituents who come to them or call them, take their time and do not express gratitude. Be gracious and grateful, and they will remember you!

see HOW-TO...page 20

DEM vows to improve customer service

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

The "lean staffing" model is being applied at the Dept. of Environmental Management, and DEM officials say that it will lead to better customer service and streamlined processing of applications and permits.

DEM has used the model in the past to improve enforcement.

Lean staffing is a Japanese method known as Kaizen (pronounced KY-ZEHN), which aims to eliminate waste and backlogs while making the most of a limited staff. It can be applied in a number of ways, from project-based time and motion studies all the way to intensive testing of employees to find out their strongest and weakest work characteristics, and assigning them to projects accordingly. Many compa-

see DEM...page 22

Licensed in Mass.? Have your CEUs ready!

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

If you work in Massachusetts and your construction supervisor license expires on or after July 1st, be prepared to verify that you have fulfilled the necessary continuing education requirements if you want to renew.

That's the news from the Massachusetts Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BBRS). For detailed requirements, see the board's website: www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/dps/construction-supervisor-license.html. For information on available courses, see www.mass.gov/eopss/consumer-prot-and-bus-lic/license-type/csl/construction-supervisor-license-continuing.html. Courses taken before July 1, 2011, will not be accepted, according to BBRS, nor will courses that did not receive prior BBRS approval, including American Institute of Architects (AIA) courses.

Currently offering courses are the Builders Association of Greater Boston (www.BAGB.com, 617-773-1300) and the Builders Association of Central Massachusetts (www.BACM.com, 508-791-5595).

Construction supervisor license renewal forms will be received roughly 60 days before the expiration date, BBRS said, adding that copies of any certificates showing comple-

tion of required continuing education units (CEUs) should be attached to the renewal form.

A licensed construction supervisor in Massachusetts must acquire a certain number of continuing education hours for each two-year renewal period. Unrestricted construction supervisors (identified as "Construction Supervisor License" on the license card) must attain at least 12 hours of continuing education credit. Restricted construction supervisors (identified as "1 and 2 Family License" on the license card) must acquire at least 10 hours; and specialty construction supervisors must acquire at least six hours of credit. Specialty categories include: masonry, roofing, windows/siding, demolition, solid fuel burning, and insulation.

The maximum number of hours required for any licensee is 12, regardless of how many categories appear on the license card. A person licensed in a specialty category, whether one, two or all six, needs only to achieve the requisite six hours of CEUs. However, each license category requires certain content to be covered, such as workplace safety and lead-safe practices.

For more information, contact Kim Spencer at (617) 826-5236 or at kimberly.spencer@state.ma.us.



2013 Member Benefit Guide now in preparation

The Rhode Island Builders Association's membership drive continues, with the Membership Committee recently extending a very special incentive: the \$50 Referral Reward -- in cash -- to the sponsor of each new full member recruited.

In addition, the 2013 edition of RIBA's *Member Benefit Guide* is now in preparation. Along with a detailed outline of the myriad discounts members can receive on products and services, there will be an updated review of the popular Member Rebate Program, which can earn you a quarterly check for products you use on the job-site every day.

New in this year's *Member Benefit Guide* will be a complete RIBA class schedule for courses that will help you comply with pending Rhode Island continuing education requirements or just help you improve your business. There also will be complete information on how to benefit from RIBA's

Home Show, and details on RIBAlist.com, the website that brings customers to you.

Don't forget that RIBA now has an "Affiliate Member" category.

Affiliate members are entitled to all benefits of membership as outlined in the *Member Benefit Guide*. Member dues for your employees are just \$20 a

year per employee. Affiliate members must be employees of full RIBA member companies. The Referral Reward does not apply to recruiting affiliate members.

For more information, contact Elizabeth Carpenter at the RIBA office, ecarpenter@ribuilders.org or (401) 438-7400.



Obituary

Germaine E. Gallison, 98

Germaine E. Gallison, mother of Raymond E. Gallison of Newport Plate & Mirror Glass, a longtime member of the Rhode Island Builders Association, died January 16th. She was 98.

Born in Canada, Mrs. Gallison was the wife of the late Joseph H. Gallison. She was an assembler for the former Blaker Brothers Co. for 31 years before retiring in 1972. She lived in Johnston for over 65 years.

Besides Mr. Gallison, she is survived by two daughters, seven grandchildren, 11 great grandchildren and five great-great grandchildren.

Donations may be made in her memory to St. Philip Church Capital Campaign, 622 Putnam Pike, Greenville, RI 02828.





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Member Profile: Al Valliere Jr. of Nation Wide Construction Inc.

CEO at 26, Valliere keeps it growing

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

What Nation Wide Construction Corp. lacks in its geographic reach, it more than makes up for in the scope of its services.

"My dad named the company 'Nation Wide,' but I never had the nerve to tell him that the nation is a lot bigger than Rhode Island," quips second-generation owner Albert Valliere Jr.

Albert Sr. started a roofing business that, after World War II, became a roofing and siding company, based in Woonsocket. As the years went by, he created offshoots from that, owning some properties and doing some small development projects, mostly in and around the northern Rhode Island mill city.

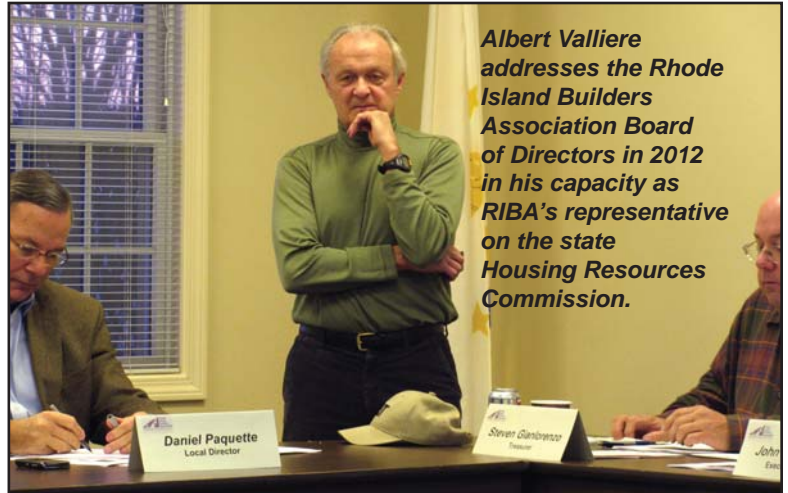
"He was a real entrepreneur, and I was well educated in the fine art of running a family business," Al recalls.

It was a good thing, because when his dad died in 1972, Al found himself at the head of the company at age 26. And it isn't hard to see that he succeeded.

Today, Nation Wide Construction has long been a leader in workforce housing development. As a matter of fact, Al represents the Rhode Island Builders Association on the state Housing Resources Commission. The company also works on commercial projects, and does a great deal of work on apartments, clinics and for social agencies. Nation Wide does residential and commercial new construction, rehabilitation and restoration, and adaptive reuse. There are 24 employees.

"We grew over the years, but it wasn't exponential. It was gradual," Al states. "I have always hired grassroots people who want to learn and who are willing to work their way up. Carpenter to foreman to superintendent to project manager: That's basically how I run the company today."

The quality of Nation Wide's work has not gone unrec-



Albert Valliere addresses the Rhode Island Builders Association Board of Directors in 2012 in his capacity as RIBA's representative on the state Housing Resources Commission.

ognized. In 2005, *Rhode Island Monthly* honored the company with its Design Award for the renovation of 14 historic buildings, plus construction of another, in the South Elmwood section of Providence. The previous year, what was then the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corp. presented its 2004 Affirmative Action Award to the company in recognition of its efforts to engage a high level of minority participation in two projects in Providence's west end.

Despite its name and fame, Nation Wide's projects rarely range outside Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts, according to Al.

"Despite the economic ups and downs over the years, we've always managed to make a pretty good living right around here," he says.

Al brought in a partner, Bob Sawyer, in 1981. Bob was with him for 23 years, retired and still works for Al part-time as an estimator.

Nation Wide has belonged to RIBA for 20 years.

"RIBA helps me keep in touch with who the 'players' are in the industry. I like to know that subcontractors are members because that gives them authenticity," Al states. "I also read the magazine from cover to cover. With the health insurance, the education and all the other benefits, it's a great organization!"

What does the future hold for Al? Retirement is a distinct possibility.

"Because of the good people who have come up through the ranks in the company, I would feel confident turning operations over to one of them," he says.

Learn more at www.NATIONWIDECONST.com.

Nation Wide Construction Inc.

Owner/CEO: Albert Valliere Jr.

RIBA member since: 1993

Focus: Residential and commercial construction, renovation and restoration

Serves: Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts

Founded: 1950

Based: Woonsocket, R.I.

Employees: 24

Member Profile: Bill Finnegan of Coventry Lumber

Keeping up: It's a full-time job

By Paul F. Eno *Editor*

With 45 employees, a challenging housing market and a constant flow of new building and remodeling products and technologies, Bill Finnegan can always count on a busy day when he walks into Coventry Lumber.

Established in 1969, the company was founded by Lionel Durand, uncle of Bill's partner, Mike Durand. In the beginning, there was one employee: Lionel.

Coventry Lumber has moved three times in those 43+ years, each time to a larger facility. The current lumber yard, at 2030 Nooseneck Hill Road in Coventry, was built in 2005.

While it's not a family business as such, three of Bill's four children have worked part time at Coventry Lumber. Bill himself, a graduate of the William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School in Lincoln, is relatively new to the industry, having arrived on the scene in April 2012. A longtime friend of Mike Durand, Bill sold his own plastic pipe valve and fitting distribution business and came in as Mike's partner last year.

A native of Worcester, Mass., Bill moved to Rhode Island as a teenager and has lived in Coventry for 23 years.

Contractors account for about 70 percent of Coventry Lumber's customer base, according to Bill.

"About 30 percent are mainly homeowners. Customers come in from far and wide, including all over Rhode Island, eastern Connecticut, as far east as Cape Cod and as far west as Connecticut at the New York state line," Bill says.

How has Coventry Lumber met the economic challenges of the last few years?

"We changed the way we purchase products and materials, how we manage our sales force, and the way we issue credit," Mike explains. "We're much more aggressive in all



Mike Durand and Bill Finnegan of Coventry Lumber

those areas. We also seek out new customers and new opportunities wherever we can. We've committed to more inventory and to using the best vendors. We look for vendors with good products who are looking for market penetration. We're doing more business with fewer vendors."

One example of the manufacturer-vendor-contractor relationship that Coventry Lumber tries to cultivate was reported in the December 2012 issue of *The Rhode Island Builder Report*. This was a partnership between Coventry Lumber and RIBA member David A. Caldwell Jr. of Caldwell and Johnson Inc. on a Narragansett house project in which a new solar shingle product by CertainTeed was used.

"We really research new products so we can put them together with the right contractors. This was a hands-on example of a homeowner looking for a product to bring his house to the next level, and finding the right builder and product to do it," Bill states.

Coventry Lumber joined the Rhode Island Builders Association in 2005.

"We have appreciated the exposure we've had through RIBA. The association advances issues related to builder needs, especially through its legislative advocacy. Training for contractors has advanced through RIBA also, and we really appreciate the classes and insurance," Bill says.

Find out more at www.coventrylumber.com.



Coventry Lumber

Owners: William Finnegan and Michael Durand

RIBA member since: 2005

Focus: Building materials and supplies

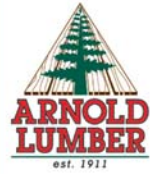
Serves: Southern New England

Founded: 1969

Based: Coventry, R.I.



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Dr. Elliot Eisenberg

Nationally Acclaimed Housing Economist

Elliot Eisenberg Ph.D. is former senior economist with the National Association of Home Builders. He is a frequent speaker on topics including: economic forecasts, economic impact of homebuilding, consequences of government regulation, cost-benefit analysis, strategic business development and other current economic issues. He is the author of more than 65 articles and serves on the Editorial Board of the Encyclopedia of Housing. He has spoken to hundreds of business groups and associations and is a frequent guest lecturer at colleges. Dr. Eisenberg has been invited to testify before lawmakers and is often asked to comment on proposed legislation. His research and opinions have been featured in Bloomberg, Business Week, Forbes, Fortune, and many other publications. He is a frequent talk show guest and authors a daily, 70-word commentary on the economy that is available at www.econ70.com.



THE BUILDER: What is the overall housing picture nationally?

EISENBERG: Nationally, things are really getting better. You can't find data out there to say that things are getting worse. Foreclosures, defaults, prices, sales, inventories, distress sales, 90-day delinquents, 30-day delinquents – according to any of those measures, the housing market is improving.

THE BUILDER: Is this a real recovery and, if so, is it because of or in spite of federal housing policy?

EISENBERG: It depends how you look at it. Look back to the dark days of 2008, right after Fannie, Freddie and AIG went under. Had the federal government not done anything at that time, had (Federal Reserve Chairman) Ben Bernanke not opened the financial spigots to radically increase liquidity, we would have gone into a severe contraction, probably double the magnitude of what we had.

In addition to that, the Obama stimulus, say what you will about it, was the right thing to do. Of course, the debt problem isn't doing anyone any good. Government should be regular, predictable and routine. We should know what taxes are and that the government is going to pay its bills.

THE BUILDER: One of our state's leading economic prognosticators, Dr. Leonard Lardaro of the University of Rhode Island, maintains that Rhode Island does not have a state economy as such, but that it is an integral part of a regional economy centered in Boston. Do you agree?

EISENBERG: I largely agree with that but, to the extent that I don't, there's even worse news economically. Historically, you are a very heavily manufacturing state, and manufacturing went into the tank very early. So you guys were really in the can by late '07. In fact, Rhode Island has been the canary in the mine shaft.

Manufacturing isn't what it was in the early 20th century, but it's still up to 15 percent of the gross state product, more than in other states.

THE BUILDER: Why is Rhode Island still struggling to come out of its residential construction recession?

EISENBERG: The construction recession comes down to uniquely Rhode Island issues. Along with Maryland and California, you are among the most regulated states in the economy.

You had a pretty nice price boom during the run-up to the recession. Providence got all gussied up and so on. But more and more regulations were imposed, and permit fees got more expensive. Suddenly the music stopped, the chairs were being taken away. Now, to build a house in Rhode Island is exceptionally expensive.

Another problem is that people in Rhode Island have alternatives. Builders can elect to drive 20 or 30 miles in any direction except south and get to Massachusetts or Connecticut, where things are easier. Missouri is kind of like this too: You have cities right next to borders. So what state government does really matters because people can just jump across the border to buy their stuff, to live or to do business. That's especially true with Rhode Island because commuting distances are so small.

THE BUILDER: We really are seeing that. For example, there are entire subdivisions in eastern Connecticut made up largely of Rhode Island "exiles."

EISENBERG: There are. That's the proof of the pudding! And Rhode Islanders aren't moving there because the weather is better.

Regulation is a cancer. I don't mean to be alarmist about it, and I have no illusion that regulations aren't increasing in every state. But some states are more aggressive at it than others. And it's not a list you want your state to be on top of.

Maryland is having trouble for the same reason Rhode Is-



land is. Most of the traffic not heading into Washington in the morning is heading south into Virginia because that's where the jobs are now. Because of its regulatory climate, Maryland is losing the competition.

THE BUILDER: Would you say that land-use regulations in particular affect the mobility of labor, state competitiveness, housing costs and economic growth in general?

EISENBERG: Yes. Rhode Island is a beautiful place, but you must stay competitive. But luckily for Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut are not exactly at the forefront of enlightened regulation either. So you have a little more opportunity to turn things around than if you were competing with, say, Texas, which is light years ahead of you, with a very light regulatory touch.

Regulation slowly sucks out a state's life, and people move away. Businesses don't come, and they don't expand. You can't point to any one regulation and say that "this is the one that broke the camel's back." It's just the slow accretion of rules, regulations and legislation over decades that weakens economic vitality.

THE BUILDER: What advice would you give to policy makers in Rhode Island if they wanted to improve the residential construction sector here? And, beyond that, what is missing in the psyches of our leaders today that allows them to keep regulating us like this when they ought to know better?

EISENBERG: Every politician comes into office with an agenda, and they all seem to believe that, if we just follow that agenda, we fix the world. We'll have bicycle paths for one person, and we'll make sure that all little kids have collars so they can't run across the street. They all have these great solutions. They all cost money, and often they are counterproductive.

There's a notion that regulation will solve all our problems. If we can just get the regulations right, we will have the best markets and the best government – together, working in "partnership." It's very hard to get regulations "right." I have a 14 year-old daughter – someone I have to "regulate." Parents are regulators, and it's a very unpleasant job because children don't want to be regulated.

People in their own lives hate to be regulated, so why do they seem to feel good when government does it? In fact, regulators seem to walk into their offices and leave their common sense in the parking lot.

I have a neighbor who works for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). His job is to make rules. One time I told him: "Hey, maybe you should put that over there in your yard," and he said, "I don't like people telling me what to do!"

I felt like telling him: "You do that all day long for a living!"

Just let it go! Don't regulate it, and if it really is important

enough to be regulated, do it with extreme sensitivity, especially when it comes to the unintended consequences. Either that or people will move to eastern Connecticut. This should be example number one to the decision makers at the State House in Providence.

THE BUILDER: How do affordable housing programs and initiatives help the market and how do they hinder it?

EISENBERG: They don't hinder it. You have to have affordable housing. Love it or hate it, you have to house people who don't make a lot of money. In Rhode Island, you can make \$30,000 a year and still be homeless because housing costs are so high because the regulatory burden is so high.

THE BUILDER: The comment has been made at the Rhode Island Builders Association that, if Rhode Island had a sensible regulatory climate, we wouldn't need public money to support the affordable-housing market.

EISENBERG: That's true. Prices are so high because of regulation, and then you have to make more regulations to force builders to build affordable housing along the way. When you have an affordable housing problem, that's a sign of a housing problem generally. It's a problem when rules and regulations make housing so expensive that a builder can't make money building a cheap house.

You can argue about what "affordable" is in Los Angeles or Texas or Providence, but the point is valid. You have a housing problem in Rhode Island.

One solution to the problem is tiny houses. There is actually a move toward that, especially in one-person households by people concerned about their "carbon footprint." Not everyone needs 1,800 square feet and up. If people want to buy them, let builders build 300, 400, 500 square-foot houses.

There are all sorts of seemingly simplistic solutions to the affordable housing problem that government won't let us employ because it would lessen their control, and they don't want to give that up.

In Montgomery County, Maryland, where I live, a county of a million people, there is a housing shortage, and housing is very expensive. But I'm not allowed to have a tenant in my finished basement. It's insanity! Allowing this would cut into the housing problem dramatically.

THE BUILDER: Rhode Island has been called an "antique jewelry box." What economic implications does that have?

EISENBERG: That's not a really good thing. Certainly, part of Rhode Island's charm is its history. But if you use that as an excuse not to build new things, it will harm the vibrancy of your economy.

see *INTERVIEW...next page*

INTERVIEW...from previous page

THE BUILDER: Last year RIBA proposed a bill that would prevent property taxes from being assessed on new construction unless the unit was sold or occupied. The bill was vetoed by Gov. Lincoln Chafee. How would such a bill affect the market, and is there any reason to believe that such a bill would drive up housing costs?

EISENBERG: That was a good bill. Michigan just passed such a bill. Cars that sat on the lot, they had no tax on those. Houses that sat on the lot were taxed, but they realized this was not a good idea. Unoccupied houses require few, if any, public services. So appropriately reducing the tax burden is a good approach to helping the home construction market, it would reduce the rate of loss for the builder, and it would help housing affordability.

THE BUILDER: Children are often viewed by communities as a financial liability, and many towns quietly try to prevent residential growth because of school funding issues. What is the true impact of population growth on a town, and is it beneficial to a town's "bottom line"?

EISENBERG: Let people build as many houses as they

want as long as they can prove they are sterilized. Then, in 60 or 70 years, the town will have no people. Problem solved!

Seriously: Children as a financial liability for a community? You've got to be kidding me. It's bunk!

THE BUILDER: So what would be your overall suggestion for us?

EISENBERG: Rhode Island should go through all its codes, including tax codes, and lighten up! You will find regulations that are old, that are not needed or that have been superseded. I'd like to see Rhode Island's rule makers out there in the regular economy so they can see first-hand the impact they cause.

If something needs to be regulated, I get it. Suppose we're talking about mine safety. Mine owners have to have this or that safety feature, so much ventilation, plus this and that. But suppose regulators just said something like, "Okay, it's your mine. Do what you need. The technology you need to keep your miners safe is out there. But we're going to fine you \$5 million or \$10 million for every miner who dies on the job."

Just think how safe mines would suddenly be!



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A selection of news briefs from around the state related to housing and land use

COVENTRY

HTC restoration is subject of tour

In an interesting sidebar to the issue of whether to restore Rhode Island's Historic Tax Credit (HTC), Speaker of the House Gordon Fox joined 24 other lawmakers and local officials on January 11th to tour the Anthony Mill in Coventry. The historic structure is currently being rehabilitated for 122 housing units. DiPrete Engineering Associates, a member of the Rhode Island Builders Association, is one of the firms working on the development. The tour was organized by Rep. Scott J. Guthrie (D-Coventry) to help prepare legislators for discussions about restoring the HTC.

FOSTER, GLOCESTER, SCITUATE

Housing repair funds frozen

The state Dept. of Administration's Division of Housing and Community Development has suspended federal funds allotted for housing repairs in Foster, Glocester and Scituate pending an audit of the Western Rhode Island Home Repair Program. The frozen funds amount to more than \$500,000 and are being held because of "issues of accountability of resources and lack of compliance with regu-

lations," Michael Tondra, chief of the division, was quoted as saying.

There had been no accusations of wrongdoing as of this writing.

HOPKINTON

SHAB upholds town

The State Housing Appeals Board (SHAB) on January 29th upheld the Hopkinton Planning Board's 2010 decision to add two conditions to the approval of the proposed Brushy Brook subdivision. The conditions include reducing the number of units from 270 to no more than 145, and moving the project father away from Arcadia State Park.

SHAB agreed with the town's contention that the Planning Board had only altered, not denied, the application.

NORTH SMITHFIELD

Council in flurry of rezoning action

The North Smithfield Town Council has begun a major rezoning of properties along Eddie Dowling Highway. In January, the council rezoned a dozen lots along the commercial stretch from "business neighborhood" to "business highway" in what was among the first of 64 recommended changes related to the development of Dowling Village, a commercial/residential mixed-use development shared by North Smithfield and Woonsocket.



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LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE...from page 8

Ms. Rainone suggested that a consistent funding stream for workforce housing not only would eliminate the need for housing bond issues every few years, but would be a permanent boost to the economy's housing sector. To that end, she called for establishment of a state housing fund. Several committee members expressed concern about how this would be funded.

In our opinion, if the state and local communities would help the housing market by lightening up on unnecessary regulations, then perhaps we wouldn't need taxpayer money to fund workforce housing.

Ms. Rainone also mentioned that a number of towns are in favor of relaxing or repealing the 10 percent workforce housing requirement currently mandated by the state. She recommended that both RIH and RIBA closely monitor any such legislation that appears.

RIBA-supported legislation

On our own legislative front, we discussed measures to be monitored and/or supported by RIBA during the current General Assembly session. Guiding us through all this were our capable lobbyists, Joe Walsh, Gayle Wolf and Tom Hanley.

Among the legislation that RIBA backs this year is a bill that would exclude slope as an impediment to a lot's buildable area.

Since adequate notice of the adoption, repeal or amendment of local regulations is a major problem for property owners, RIBA supports a bill that requires municipalities to provide an opt-in e-mail notification system. This would provide the public with a more modern notice process. This open-government legislation is a needed next step to keeping the public informed about local laws that affect their property, their rights and their quality of life.

Keeping local politicians and boards more transparent is good for Rhode Island.

RIBA also proposes that the legislature, because of the continuing poor economy, extend the expiration date of approved permits until 2015. Known as the "Tolling Bill" and the "Permit Extension Act," this bill would save Rhode Islanders from foreclosures on properties, perhaps involving whole subdivisions, whose owners might be forced to re-engineer entire developments at extraordinary cost.

In addition, we will once again propose that local taxes "at full and fair cash value" not be collected on any new residential property until that property is either occupied or sold. This is basically an inventory tax repeal.

Watch *The Rhode Island Builder Report* for more information as the 2013 legislative session progresses.



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BOARD...from page 2

Association (RINLA) would participate in the Home Show for the first time and would provide the landscaping for the Model Home.

In addition, directors were informed that the Homes for Our Troops organization has acquired a lot in Burrillville and that RIBA's Builders Helping Heroes Charity will build a home there for a wounded Rhode Island veteran.

Watch *The Rhode Island Builder Report* for more information.



PRESIDENT...from page 5

page 8), headed by Ed Ladouceur of the Stormtite Co. (a member of the Warwick City Council) and Steve Carlino of Douglas Lumber Home Center, we have been monitoring a number of bills of concern to our industry. We also have several bills that have been, or will be, submitted on our behalf. For a full update, see the Legislative Committee report on page 8.

Bring a friend!

RIBA, especially our Remodelers Committee and our Professional Women in Building Council, are sponsoring ongoing seminars and social events for members, but also to introduce non-members to RIBA. Certainly the best recruiting tool is for you to bring a subcontractor or other industry colleague to experience RIBA up close. Remember: When you recruit a new regular member, you get \$50 in cash!

Watch the calendar in *The Rhode Island Builder Report* and online at www.RIBUILDERS.org for these events. Be sure to participate and bring a friend!



HOW-TO...from page 10

7. Invite the legislator to social affairs such as local opening celebrations, ground breakings or other events – especially charitable events -- that you or your company might be involved in. They will appreciate the opportunity to meet constituents, learn about your company and its plans and meet local reporters.

8. During elections, provide financial support. Walk the district with the candidate, provide sign material and locations or provide election-day volunteers, etc.

9. Lobbying is cumulative, and it takes patience and persistence. Our effectiveness cannot be maintained by RIBA's lobbyists and Legislative Committee alone. To be effective, RIBA needs its members to be active government-relations representatives every day!

For more information on any legislative issue facing the shelter industry in 2010, contact Mr. Marcantonio at (401) 438-7400 or jmarcantonio@ribuilders.org.



EZOVSKI...from page 1

tory standard go forward," said Mr. Ezovski, who chairs the Regulations Subcommittee of the Annual Rhode Island SBA Economic Summit and represents no trade or interest group. He does not belong to the Rhode Island Builders Association.

The five-hour, January 17th event brought the 75 state representatives to RIC to hear from Rhode Island business leaders such as Mr. Ezovski, along with experts in business and education from Massachusetts and Connecticut. House Speaker Gordon Fox (D-Providence) said he hoped lawmakers would come away with specific policy ideas to address the state's economic problems during the current General Assembly session.

As one of the answers to the state's economic downturn, RIBA supports a statewide set of regulatory standards because members currently face a labyrinth of local regulations that exceed state rules, complicate permitting, lengthen construction times and otherwise hinder the housing market.

Mr. Ezovski, a former vice-chairman of the North Smithfield Water Authority, said that he as a civil engineer has encountered the "cobweb" of regulations for years, and that it only harms the economy.

He also responded to an interview with Lorraine Joubert, director of Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO), which appeared in the February edition of *The Rhode Island Builder Report*. Ms. Joubert is in favor of continued environmental regulation by local communities that, where appropriate, exceed state regulations in order to protect local drinking water sources.

"Under their home rule charters, Rhode Island's communities have the right to establish their own governments that can act as needed. But in my environmental practice over the years, especially in dealing with the release of hazardous materials, I've learned that the waters these communities are trying to protect are actually under state jurisdiction," Mr. Ezovski said.

Groundwater and surface waters are all legally "waters of the state," he explained.

"It's the state's responsibility to protect these waters, which move at different rates and in different directions, and don't abide by town boundaries. The water in one place is not the same water that was there yesterday."

'Cobweb of regulations'

"The state is in a better position to protect these waters than the towns are. The state should be the only one taking that responsibility so that we don't wind up with this cobweb of regulations that we can't even see through. If someone is trying to do some sensible development, something of benefit to the community, they have to make their way through this web. In some cases, it's a web that is focused more on no-growth than it is on water protection."

Mr. Ezovski disagreed with Ms. Joubert's contention that "one size does not fit all" when it comes to towns and water protection.

"In a state the size of Rhode Island, a single, statewide wetlands and septic system regulation is a fine example of how we can regionalize and have quality of life that is not impaired, and an efficiency that is needed," stated Mr. Ezovski, who said he has gained great experience over the years working with the Dept. of Environmental Management (DEM) as a septic system designer and installer.

"I have no reservations in saying that we have a very good DEM. We are one of the states that has led the country. We are a recognized environmental model in how to manage onsite sewage disposal. So by placing these local regulatory tasks in the hands of DEM, communities would be deferring to an agency that is leading the way."

Mr. Ezovski believes that DEM's 2010 *Storm Water Design Manual* already "does a fine job" addressing statewide regulation. Education is key to getting the ball rolling, he added.

"I believe that simply educating people can be a simple solution to many of these issues."

Watch *The Rhode Island Builder Report* for more on this regulatory matter as it develops.

HOME SHOW...from page 6

plier, a general contractor or a subcontractor, 2013 is the year to put your products and services in front of the Home Show's visitors.

Remember, the vast majority of those who pass through the turnstiles are homeowners with projects in mind, or people who plan to be homeowners. Even renters might need what you have to offer. Data from the 2012 Home Show indicate that targeting new demographics is bringing more qualified leads to the show. Forty percent of last year's visitors were first-time attendees, and 87 percent reported being satisfied with the show.

"Our goal is a Home Show that will help the industry, one that will help members find work and one that will help the public find good contractors," Mr. Marcantonio said. "RIBA is asking all members to consider exhibiting. There is still time."

Recovering housing and remodeling markets, and an April date when people are "thinking Spring" after a cold winter, are expected to attract a huge number of visitors to the 2013 show. Whether you're in building, remodeling, redecorating, financing, landscaping, energy efficiency, or any other field that provides what current and prospective homeowners need, this is your year to exhibit at the Home Show! Visit www.RIBAHOMESHOW.com, or contact the show's producer, Yoffe Exposition Services, at (800) 963-3395.

MEMBERS...from page 3

Gerard Allard	J&A Electric, Inc.	Brian S. Reid	Reid's Remodeling Inc.
Michael DiScullo	J&L Builders, Inc.	Anthony J. Aurgemma	RI Home Improvement, Inc.
Joseph DiGiovanni, Jr.	J.D. Construction Company	Richard A. Solomon	Richard A. Solomon
Jason Ledsworth	J.L. Electric	Andrew N. Thomson	Risk & Safety Management
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Krzysztof Puzanowski	KP Construction	Ronald J. Caniglia	Stand Corporation
Mary Lou Mancieri	Lawton Valley Investments, Inc.	Stephen C. DeMetrick	Stephen C. DeMetrick
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Bruce P. Loeckler	Loeckler Associates, Inc.	Daniel G. Paquette	Sterling Const. Management, LLC
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Michael F. Smith	M.F. Smith Associates, LTD	Jonathan Gilbert	Stone Soup Cottage Works, LLC
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Ronald Rainone	Rainone Landscaping Co., Inc.	William R. Van Voast	Wm R. Van Voast Elect. Contractor
		Robert D. Yoffe	Yoffe Exposition Services, Inc.

DEM...from page 10

nies and government agencies around the world have been applying the lean staffing model in recent years, especially if both their personnel and budgets are stretched.

"Improving customer service is a top goal at DEM," said Director Janet Coit. "As part of this effort, we are engaging DEM employees to identify and prioritize areas for improvement, and looking at both the quality of permit submissions and at DEM responsiveness."

The lean staffing model is nothing new at DEM. In previous years, it has been applied to improve enforcement in the agency's compliance and inspection programs. An October 2009 report on a review of those programs by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) noted a DEM statement that, "Our first focus is to streamline and shorten the

time to issue a formal enforcement action."

Training DEM staff in the lean methods isn't free. The agency has retained Exceeda Consulting Inc., based in Seekonk, Mass., on a "blanket purchase agreement" for up to \$16,800 that runs through June 30th, according to DEM's Gail Mastrati. This includes training for some DEM employees, a multi-day Kaizen event, and presentation of an executive briefing.

Training for a 10-member "DEM Lean Team" was completed in November. Assisted by Exceeda staff, these "facilitators" have been evaluating staff and processes throughout DEM.

In addition to evaluating major programs, DEM conducted a review of the stormwater engineering process during four half-day sessions in December.

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