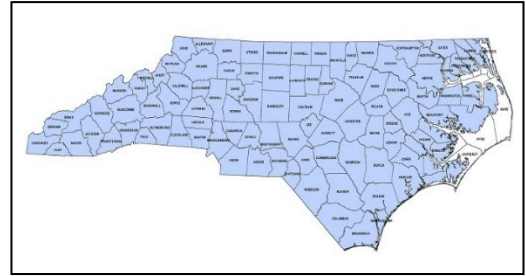


## The Old North State of Inspections (2022 update)

“The Marketplace” – a deep dive

- [Move to COQB online portal](#)
- SurveyMonkey
- Session Law 2018-29 (H948)
- Agency Rules
- Residential Changeout Inspector
- Alternative approaches to increase inspectors



Date: ~~July 12, 2020~~ January 18, 2022

Author: Mike Hejduk, PE, MPA


### Summary:


CEOs and AHJ Primary Contacts now have direct access through the COQB online [CEO LOGIN](#) portal to subscribe to and view subscribers respectively. Areas of service are by county. The [COQB – Inspector Marketplace](#) web page as of 1/18/22 still includes links to [Sign Up Here](#) and the [CEO List](#). These will be removed by early February 2022 as the new process is promoted and training is provided. CEOs who hold Standard Certificates will now find the Sign Up under their **Profile** tab. AHJ Primary Contacts should use the **AHJ Dashboard** tab to search for inspectors willing to work within their jurisdiction [see screen shots below].

*These will be removed by early February 2022*

## Inspector Marketplace

NC Code Enforcement Officials (CEOs) interested in secondary employment with short-staffed Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJs) as part-time employees or contract basis may subscribe to this list. CEOs are advised to get permission from their primary employer AHJ before subscribing.

[Sign Up Here](#) 

[CEO List](#) 

(no password required effective 5/19/21)

New CEO Marketplace

**Employment Marketplace**

**Jurisdictions across North Carolina could use your assistance!**  
 If you would like to earn extra money in your trade, select one or more of the following Counties where you would be willing to travel and perform **Inspections**, or perform remote **Plan Reviews**.

I would be willing to perform the following:

On Site Inspections

Plan Reviews

---

Select the trades for which you would be willing to perform Inspections or Plan Reviews for other Jurisdictions.

Building       Electrical

Fire Prevention    Mechanical

Plumbing

---

Select the following to assist Jurisdictions within your home county.

Johnston

Adjacent Counties  
 Select from the following to assist jurisdictions within these adjacent counties.

All Other Counties  
 To select (or de-select) multiple counties, hold the CTRL key down while clicking on the county name.

Alamance  
 Alexander  
 Alleghany  
 Anson  
 Ashe

Selected Counties  
 None selected

New AHJ (Jurisdiction) Marketplace search feature (populated by county)

**Wake Co.**

**Certificate Marketplace**

Use the following criteria to search for Inspectors who have expressed a willingness to assist in **Plan Reviews** and/or **On Site Inspections** for Jurisdictions within your county.

<b>Assistance Needed for:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plan Reviews <input type="checkbox"/> On-site Inspections	<b>Trades Needed:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Protection <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing <input type="checkbox"/> Residential Changeout	<b>Min Cert Level</b> Level 1 ▼
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Finally, the NCDOI staff now have some dashboards within the database to view activity within the Marketplace as indicators of its use.

**Certificate Marketplace**

CEOs in the Marketplace (204)

Jurisdiction searches, past 30 days:  
(20)

There were no market searches last month.

Cert. Marketplace Inspectors	204	204	204	07/01/2021	01/19/2022
Cert. Marketplace Counties	83	83	83	07/01/2021	01/19/2022
Cert. Marketplace Jurisdictions performing one or more searches	7	7	7	07/01/2021	01/19/2022
Cert. Marketplace searches by Jurisdictions (total)	20	20	20	07/01/2021	01/19/2022
Cert. Marketplace Jurisdiction searches for Plan Reviewers	6	6	6	07/01/2021	01/19/2022
Cert. Marketplace Jurisdiction searches for Field Inspectors	18	18	18	07/01/2021	01/19/2022
Cert. Marketplace Jurisdiction searches for Building (all levels)	12	12	12	07/01/2021	01/19/2022
Cert. Marketplace Jurisdiction searches for Electrical (all levels)	8	8	8	07/01/2021	01/19/2022
Cert. Marketplace Jurisdiction searches for Fire (all levels)	7	7	7	07/01/2021	01/19/2022
Cert. Marketplace Jurisdiction searches for Mechanical (all levels)	7	7	7	07/01/2021	01/19/2022
Cert. Marketplace Jurisdiction searches for Plumbing (all levels)	10	10	10	07/01/2021	01/19/2022
Cert. Marketplace Jurisdiction searches for Residential Changeout	5	5	5	07/01/2021	01/19/2022

### Background

The 10-year period 2010 to 2020 has seen a rebound in commercial and residential construction in North Carolina since the Great Recession of 2009. This has created a continuing demand for qualified Code-enforcement officials (CEOs) to perform inspections in a timely manner. But local government layoffs and retirements by an aging workforce have resulted in a shrinking pool of qualified inspectors. The Code Officials Qualification Board (COQB), Building Code Council (BCC), Department of Insurance (DOI), Home Builders Association (HBA), and General Assembly (NCGA) have considered various initiatives to address this issue. The ‘supply’ of CEOs is regulated in part by certification standards set by the COQB. Local government Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJs) in their capacity as employers determine personnel salaries and trade and level certifications needed driven by development. The private sector could supply “third party” inspectors.

This article reviews the origins and implementation of the inspector “marketplace” and asks several questions. What metrics are being used to evaluate its effectiveness? Is this program meeting its objectives? If not, what alternatives are available?

## SurveyMonkey

In August of 2017 an “Inspector Marketplace” was created by DOI Engineering Division staff using SurveyMonkey®. Think of it as a bulletin board with business cards or an unmanaged peer to peer network.

**OPEN**

THE "INSPECTOR MARKETPLACE" For NC Code Officials\* interested in secondary employment with short-sta...

Created: 08/18/2017 Modified: 07/09/2020

211 Responses

This voluntary, informal mechanism was created as a quick solution to AHJ reported shortages of CEOs which caused delays in inspections that impacted construction schedules. Time is money. AHJs were charging permit fees but not providing their customers (builders) the requested/required inspection services in a “timely manner<sup>1</sup>” as required by State statute.

In concept, retiring inspectors or those looking for additional work, could announce their availability to AHJs needing more staff. A “win-win” for everyone.

A total of 211 certified CEOs are signed up indicating their willingness and availability through the [Inspector Marketplace \(sign up\)](#) on the Engineering and Codes web page. AHJs can access the list of candidates through the [Inspector Marketplace \(CEO list\)](#) using the password “Albemarle.”



The majority in all 5 trades hold level 3 certificates. [note: The April 2020 COQB report stated that the total number of CEOs who have *ever* achieved this level of certification is 292. The number of *active* CEOs who currently have 5 level III certificates is 187.] Preferences for field inspection and plan review positions are listed. CEOs provide their contact information and location. Retired inspectors that would otherwise hold inactive certificates because they were not employed by an AHJ could now remain on active status, albeit as a part-time or contract employee. However, the format of this information for AHJs is not user friendly. Each record must be accessed individually. Engineering Division staff have provided the data to AHJs upon request in excel format for ease of use and to better evaluation geographic proximity.

This “free service” has been available for 3 years. Little has been published that would answer the following questions regarding its efficacy.

- Is there a reporting mechanism that tracks how many of these subscribers were subsequently employed or by which AHJs?
- Is there a reporting mechanism that provides information on how many inspections they perform for what trades and level inspections supplementing full time staff?
- Is there any information on the AHJ terms and conditions or pay rates of these part-time/contract inspectors?
- To what extent is this inspector marketplace meeting the current staffing needs of AHJs?

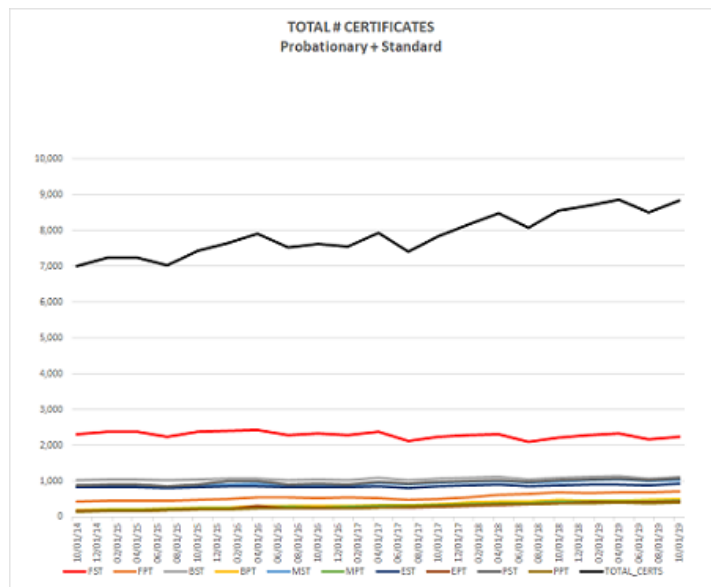
There are 4,000 active CEOs employed primarily by 100 county AHJs and more than 200 city AHJs. These CEOs currently hold about 9,000 certificates issued by the COQB.

<sup>1</sup> [Session Law 2015-145 \(H255\)](#) PART III, Clarify Official Misconduct for Code Officials, Section 3.(a) amended G.S. 143-151.8(c)(6) “The habitual failure to provide requested inspections in a timely manner.”

- There are 3 types of certificates: Probationary, Standard and Limited.
  - There are 5 trades: Fire, Building, Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing\*
  - There are 3 levels: 1, 2, 3 based on building occupancy, area and height.
- \*the new Residential Changeout Inspector certificate is addressed later

The limited number of inspectors exposed a weakness in the current certification system. Many CEOs were only certified in a single or two trades based on their education and experience prior to becoming an inspector. To perform all the required inspections on a typical single-family home, up to four (4) inspectors could be required to inspect the separate Building, Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing code requirements. While some inspectors may hold Level 1 Building and Plumbing or Mechanical and Plumbing, Electrical certification was the most difficult to attain. While Mechanical and Plumbing Level 1 State exam pass rates were in the 80% to 90% range, Electrical Level 1 State exam pass rates were consistently 30% for years. An analysis of Board course end-of-course test scores compared to State exam scores showed clear gaps. Community College course instructors create and administer the end-of-course tests with high pass rates. The implication, and student evaluation comments, confirmed that while they could pass the class, they were unprepared to be successful on the State exam.

It appears the COQB and AHJs have met the current demand for inspectors largely by relying on Probationary certificates that were extended from 2 to 3 years duration and may not be renewed. The chart at right shows the total number of certificates over the past 5 years (2014 – 2019) increase by almost 30% by the black line at the top. Various color lines at the bottom are per trade representing both Standard and Probationary. The level red line is the total number of Fire Standard certificates.



Anyone may be issued a Probationary certificate provided the AHJ attests the individual will be appropriately supervised.

While many AHJs were requiring multi-trade inspectors to reduce personnel costs and to perform inspections more efficiently, the COQB application, education and examination process could not meet demand. Standard course instructors relate that students (even inspectors with years of experience in a single trade) with no building or electrical background were overwhelmed with the amount of unfamiliar technical material in a different code book taught in a 3 to 5-day course.

The Inspector Marketplace survey is not connected to the web based COQB inspector Oracle database that contains information on all CEOs and AHJs. Neither does it reflect existing AHJ interlocal agreements.

The CEOs enrolled in this program are from the existing, limited pool of qualified inspectors. Their availability may have a marginal staffing benefit, but they do not represent a significant new, additional source of talent.

## Session Law 2018-29 (H948)

The speed and consistency of inspections has been a recurring topic for the NC Home Builders Assoc. (NCHBA) and subject of building code enforcement reform legislation in recent years - despite the enactment of [Session Law 2015-145 \(H255\)](#) on July 13, 2015 and its specific provision in Section 3.(b) “The North Carolina Code Officials Qualification Board shall, no later than October 1, 2015, notify all Code enforcement officials in the State of the clarification to the grounds for disciplinary action enacted by this act.” The figure above is the postcard notification mailed individually to thousands of CEOs across North Carolina nearly 5 years ago.

**September 4, 2015 ATTN: NC Code Enforcement Official:** Session Law 2015-145, PART III, Section 3.(b) requires the NC Code Officials Qualification Board to notify all Code enforcement officials in the State, no later than October 1, 2015, of the clarification to the grounds for disciplinary action for OFFICIAL MISCONDUCT.

**NC General Statute § 143-151.8 is amended with a new subsection as follows:**

(c) For purposes of this Article, “willful misconduct, gross negligence, or gross incompetence” in addition to the meaning of those terms under other provisions of the General Statutes or at common law, shall include any of the following:

- (1) The enforcement of a Code requirement applicable to a certain area or set of circumstances in other areas or circumstances not specified in the requirement.
- (2) For an alternative design or construction method that has been appealed under G.S. 143-140.1 and found by the Department of Insurance to comply with the Code, to refuse to accept the decision by the Department to allow that alternative design or construction method under the conditions or circumstances set forth in the Department’s decision for that appeal.
- (3) For an alternative construction method currently included in the Building Code, to refuse to allow the alternative method under the conditions or circumstances set forth in the Code for that alternative method.
- (4) The enforcement of a requirement that is more stringent than or otherwise exceeds the Code requirement.
- (5) To refuse to implement or adhere to an interpretation of the Building Code issued by the Building Code Council or the Department of Insurance.
- (6) The habitual failure to provide requested inspections in a timely manner.

Statutes are sometimes a blunt instrument. Item (6) clearly reflects a threat or “stick” approach to changing inspector and department behavior and the problem of timely inspections. Unfortunately, the reasons for many statutory changes are not well documented or accessible after the fact and language can sometimes have unintended consequences. [note: in the absence of current Law and Administration inspector courses by the UNC Chapel Hill, School of Government, DOI staff has created an online reference resource course entitled “Session Law” under the Supplemental tab that includes Bills, Session Laws and statute changes by legislative cycle.]

The term “marketplace” subsequently appeared in [Session Law 2018-29 \(H948\)](#), Section 2.(a) amended [G.S. 143-151.12](#) by adding a new power to the COQB. “(9) Establish within the Department of Insurance a *marketplace* pool of qualified Code-enforcement officials available for the following purposes:” [*emphasis added*]. This Session Law was approved June 22, 2018.

This marketplace pool is “established within the Department of Insurance.” [Chapter 58 Insurance](#), Article 2 Commissioner of Insurance, 58-2-40 Powers and Duties of Commissioner, required amendment (1a) to address fees for services performed by Code-enforcement officials.

At the same time, SL 2018-29 Section 2.(b) modified G.S. 143-139(b) such that “The Insurance Commissioner shall have general authority, through the Division of Engineering of the Department of Insurance, to supervise, administer, and enforce all sections of the North Carolina State Building Code....” in a new and major way where DOI would provide inspections directly:

- 1) Cooperate with local official and inspectors. [existing authority]
- 2) Per [G.S. 143-139.4](#), timely assign a CEO from the marketplace pool established under G.S. 143-151.12(9)a. to conduct any plumbing, electrical systems, general building restrictions and regulations, heating and air-conditioning, or general construction inspection required by the Code.

Clearly, this authority represents movement toward a centralized approach to inspector assignment beyond the voluntary, peer to peer approach of the Inspector Marketplace described above.

The new statutory language begs the question whether the *marketplace* pool established by statute has any relation to the “Inspector Marketplace” created in SurveyMonkey? If not, where is the list of CEOs maintained in the new DOI *marketplace* pool?

One possible source of inspectors to meet this need, [House Bill 949 Code-Enforcement Response Team](#) introduced in Session 2017 but not enacted, could effectively provide certified CEOs directed by the Commissioner of Insurance who could address consistency, oversight and theoretically perform inspections. Presumably they would also come from the pool of existing CEOs but rather than being employed by local government AHJs they would be State employees. Since the two retirement systems are independent, inspectors retiring from local government might want to extend their earning potential. Below is the substance of the Bill.

Section 1. The Department of Insurance is authorized to expend up to one million four hundred ninety thousand two hundred eighteen dollars (\$1,490,218) from appropriations to the Department for the purpose of creating 10 new full-time equivalent (FTE) positions within the Department of Insurance, Office of State Fire Marshal, providing training to local government code-enforcement officials and to contractors on matters relating to the North Carolina State Building Code, and offering technical interpretations on questions arising under the said Code. The positions would be physically placed within the Division of Engineering and shall include two positions in each of the following Code areas: North Carolina Residential Code, North Carolina State Building Code, North Carolina Fire Prevention Code, North Carolina Plumbing Code, North Carolina Mechanical Code, and North Carolina Electrical Code.

Section 2. This act becomes effective July 1, 2018.

Historically in North Carolina, local administration and enforcement of the building code has been the responsibility of local government county and city jurisdictions. The Commissioner of Insurance’s role being indirect and essentially one of oversight through staffing of both the BCC and COQB and issuing informal and formal interpretations of the code. [G.S. 153A-352](#) and [G.S. 160A-412](#) listed the duties and responsibilities of county and city inspection departments and other statutes granted AHJs authority to set inspection fees. With a “*delayed due to COVID-19*” effective date of August 1, 2021, a new long sought [G.S. 160D-1104](#), enacted by [Session Law 2019-111 \(S355\)](#), repealed both existing chapters and consolidates land development regulation in a single chapter. This is a critical component of North Carolina’s economic development policy.

It should be noted that [G.S. 143-139.4](#) and its “two business day” inspection performance requirement found in paragraph (a) is contained in [Article 9 Building Code Council and Building Code](#). This 2-page statute effectively expanded authority (or burdened, depending upon one’s point of view) the Commissioner of Insurance with the responsibility to provide CEOs anywhere in the State for a flat inspection fee rate of \$30 per hour to perform the inspection. No allowance was made for the cost of travel time or per diem. Also, other than the fee for the actual inspection time, this legislative mandate appeared to provide no additional DOI funding to administer this program.

Reading between the lines, the intent of this legislation appears to be – if an AHJ cannot perform inspections in a timely manner, then the DOI will handle them and the AHJ must forfeit the permit revenue back to the customer (permit holder).

In addition, the statute includes specific process provisions that are initiated once certain conditions are met. The kind of language normally contained in administrative agency rules.

Section 2.(e) set the effective date as August 1, 2018, and directed the Commissioner of Insurance to adopt temporary rules to implement the section. The required Public Hearing for temporary rules was held May 13, 2019. The Session Law directed that permanent rules be adopted no later than August 1, 2019. Permanent rules had an effective date of September 1, 2019 and set a fee of \$60 per hour for alternative inspections.

## Agency Rules

The North Carolina Administrative Code (NCAC) rules created pursuant to [G.S. 143-139.4](#) appear in CHAPTER 08 - ENGINEERING AND BUILDING CODES DIVISION, SECTION .1600 - ALTERNATIVE INSPECTIONS:

- [11 NCAC 08 .1601 DEFINITIONS](#)
- [11 NCAC 08 .1602 REQUEST FOR AN ALTERNATIVE INSPECTION](#)
- [11 NCAC 08 .1603 QUALIFIED MARKETPLACE INSPECTORS](#)

Rule .1601 defines “Alternative Inspections” as those performed by “Qualified Marketplace Inspectors” and “Timely manner” as within two business days.

Rule .1602 details the process for requesting “Alternative Inspections” and provides that permit holders shall pay the Commissioner of Insurance a \$60 per hour fee for the inspection and may recoup inspection fees paid to the AHJ.

Rule .1603 requires Qualified Marketplace Inspectors be registered for temporary work with the [North Carolina Office of State Human Resources, Temporary Solutions](#) and be issued an identification badge by OSFM prior to beginning work. The Qualified Marketplace Inspector shall display his or her identification badge on his or her person at all times during the conduct of an alternative inspection. A Qualified Marketplace Inspector shall submit an inspection report to OSFM no later than one business day following the completion of the alternative inspection.

It is unclear how many “Alternative Inspections” have been requested or performed since the statute and rules became effective.

However, the BCC also has the power to create agency rules and uses the NC State Building Code, NC Administrative Code and Policies, to regulate permits and the performance of inspections. Inspection department duties are addressed in Chapter 2, Section 204, 204.2.3 Duties.

It is unclear why the BCC does not set performance standards, or establish a “Standards of Practice” by agency rule for timely inspections in the NC Administrative Code and Policies.

While informal surveys and anecdotal reports from AHJs suggest that the majority of inspections are being completed within 2 business days, “appliance changeout” inspections are backlogged. Reportedly some AHJs have hundreds of HVAC and hot water heater changeout permits needing inspections by multi-trade inspectors.

Recall that the most challenging certificate to acquire is the Electrical level 1 and that only 1 out of



3 CEOs pass the State exam. All appliance changeouts typically include an electrical component that requires inspection for code compliance.

## Residential Changeout Inspector

[Session Law 2019-174 \(H675\)](#)<sup>2</sup> authorized a new COQB certificate in SECTION 2. [G.S. 143-151.13\(b\)](#) (6) Residential Changeout Inspector (RCI). The rationale for this new certificate is explained in an April 24, 2019 memo by Cliff Isaac, PE, Deputy Commissioner, reproduced below.

Adding a new standard certificate to the current five inspections certificates under the administration of the NC Code Officials Qualifications Board. The "Residential changeout inspector" would specialize in residential change outs of like for like mechanical (HVAC) systems and water heaters. By creating this certificate, inspectors will be able to take one standard residential changeout class, the law/admin class and pass the state exam to perform these inspections. Currently, an inspector must have electrical, mechanical and plumbing certificates to perform inspections on HVAC systems. Also, this new certification will cover all residential changeouts in 1-2 family dwellings, townhomes, condos and apartments that operate on single phase power, regardless of the size of the residential building. This will increase the number of inspectors performing changeout inspections. This added certificate will free up more experienced inspectors to perform regular inspections on homes and businesses adding a significant increase in capacity in high growth areas across the state. Below are recommendations to local inspection departments:

1. Residential changeout inspectors schedule appointments at specific times when contacted by the homeowner or HVAC contractor.
2. Provide flexibility for HVAC systems and water heaters to be inspected after regular business hours, such as nights and weekends.
3. Hire full time, part-time or contract employees to become residential changeout inspectors to allow more experienced inspectors to perform regular inspections.
4. Allow part-time and contract employees to work with other jurisdictions to provide residential changeout inspections.
5. If an inspector does not have access into the home, the homeowner should be held responsible and not the HVAC contractor.

The NC Code Officials Qualifications Board will create the board rules based upon the following:

*"The Residential Changeout Inspector certification will be for residential occupancies only including 1-2 family dwellings, townhomes, condos and apartments limited to single phase HVAC systems and gas and electric water heaters in which are replacements of existing like for like systems. The certification will be applicable to any certification level. An inspector with this certification can be hired by the jurisdiction as a full time, part-time or contract employee."*

A jurisdiction can hire anyone that is certified as a residential changeout inspector to perform these this type of inspections. A residential changeout inspector can be granted a probationary certificate and with the jurisdiction's approval, perform these inspections until

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<sup>2</sup> [Session Law 2019-174 \(H675\)](#) approved July 26, 2019, SECTION 2 amended G.S. 143-151.13(b) by adding a new type of CEO "(6) Residential changeout inspector" effective October 1, 2019.

passing the course and state exam within 3 years. NC Code Officials Qualifications Board will immediately work with NCDOI staff and others to produce the class, state exam and new rules to be adopted.

No additional source of funding was provided to create the Board curriculum for the Standard Certificate education course taught through the NC Community College System.

Proposed rules have been noticed in the NC Register and subjected to public hearing and approval by the COQB and technical review by legal counsel to the Rules Review Commission (RRC). The rules are scheduled for RRC review in August 2020. DOI staff have been working on course curriculum concurrent with rule development.

One variation from Isaac's memo in the proposed rules is the requirement that students pass the Board course *prior* to issuance of a Probationary certificate. This course is intended for entry-level students with little or no experience in the construction industry trades. This was done intentionally to address workforce development and the gap in end-of-course scores and State exam grades resulting in low passing rates for Fire, Building and Electrical Level 1 courses noted earlier. Another innovation of this "multi-trade" course is to require students to complete an online self-study course segment prior to arriving at the Community College classroom session.

In addition to providing a pathway to a career in code enforcement for high school graduates, the RCI certificate may allow licensed home inspectors or other licensed trade contractors to easily supplement AHJ personnel.

## Alternative approaches to increase inspectors

Everything above details the significant actions that have been taken to certify and employ more inspectors so that inspections can be performed more quickly. However, there are still some alternatives that have not been considered in depth.

One that has perhaps the greatest potential to dramatically increase the number of qualified inspectors is certification of existing North Carolina licensed contractors as explained below. Notwithstanding the potential conflict-of-interest situations that could arise, there are literally tens of thousands of licensed trade contractors throughout North Carolina.

[G.S. 143-151.13\(f\)](#) already states

The Board shall issue a standard certificate to any person who is currently licensed to practice as a(n):

- (1) Architect, registered pursuant to Chapter 83A;
- (2) General contractor, licensed pursuant to Article 1 of Chapter 87;
- (3) Plumbing or heating contractor, licensed pursuant to Article 2 of Chapter 87;
- (4) Electrical contractor, licensed pursuant to Article 4 of Chapter 87; or,
- (5) Professional engineer, registered pursuant to Chapter 89C;

provided the person successfully completes a short course, as prescribed by the Board, relating to the State Building Code regulations and Code-enforcement administration. The standard certificate shall authorize the person to practice as a

qualified Code-enforcement official in a particular type of position at the level determined by the Board, based on the type of license or registration held in any profession specified above.”

There are literally thousands of individuals licensed by the State’s Occupational Licensing Boards.

What is the problem or barrier to their certification as CEOs?

Simply a Board rule that is more restrictive than the statute but applied as a “sunset” provision owing to the yellow highlighted text in parenthesis below.

11 NCAC 08 .0707 SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES (b) Registered Architect, Licensed General Contractor, Licensed Plumbing or Heating Contractor, Licensed Electrical Contractor, Registered Professional Engineer. Pursuant to G.S. 143-151.13(f), the Board will, without requiring an examination, issue a standard certificate to any person who successfully completes the Board's prescribed short course concerning state building code regulations and code enforcement administration and who is currently registered or licensed (as of June 13, 1977) by the State of North Carolina as an architect, a general contractor, a plumbing or heating contractor, an electrical contractor, or a professional engineer. The standard certificate thus issued will authorize the person to practice as a qualified code enforcement official of the type and at the performance level determined by the Board to be appropriate in light of the applicant's education, training, and experience.

This Board Rule essentially restates the statute but the “(as of June 13, 1977)” can be interpreted to mean that rather than currently licensed, *the individual must have held the license on June 13, 1977*. 43 years ago! Clearly, licensees who fit this requirement are already retired or fast approaching retirement themselves and are rare as dinosaurs. Recall that the COQB was established in 1977. This rule has an effective date of January 15, 1980. The argument goes that once the Board created educational courses and a State examination and thus an independent process to certify code-enforcement officials, there was no need for “direct commission” licensed tradesmen to fill the positions at local governments mandated by the same statute in paragraph (c).

(c) A Code-enforcement official holding office as of the date specified in this subsection for the county or municipality by which he is employed, shall not be required to possess a standard certificate as a condition of tenure or continued employment but shall be required to complete such in-service training as may be prescribed by the Board. At the earliest practicable date, such official shall receive from the Board a limited certificate qualifying him to engage in Code enforcement at the level, in the particular type of position, and within the governmental jurisdiction in which he is employed. The limited certificate shall be valid only as an authorization for the official to continue in the position he held on the applicable date and shall become invalid if he does not complete in-service training within two years following the applicable date in the schedule below, according to the governmental jurisdiction's population as published in the 1970 U.S. Census:

Counties and Municipalities over 75,000 population -- July 1, 1979

Counties and Municipalities between 50,001 and 75,000 -- July 1, 1981

Counties and Municipalities between 25,001 and 50,000 -- July 1, 1983

Counties and Municipalities 25,000 and under -- July 1, 1985

All fire prevention inspectors holding office -- July 1, 1989. Fire prevention

inspectors have until July 1, 1993, to complete in-service training.  
An official holding a limited certificate can be promoted to a position requiring a higher level certificate only upon issuance by the Board of a standard certificate or probationary certificate appropriate for such new position.

A second approach would be to align the COQB certification system more closely to the International Code Council (ICC) certification scheme that separates by Commercial and Residential, field inspection and plan review. This is beyond the scope of this article.