



2880 International Circle Colorado Springs, CO 80910

Building A Better Community
Thru Education and Enforcement



“CAN WE TALK? ”

By Terry R. Brunette ‘Special Investigator’
Regional Building Department

QUESTION: Every time we pick up a paper, watch TV or turn on the radio we hear about all of the properties in foreclosure and that it’s a buyers market. My husband thinks we should pick up a property or two with what’s left of our 401K’s, fix them up and sell them. The cable shows make this look so easy but I’m not convinced. I would appreciate your thoughts on this endeavor.

ANSWER: Great question. Many of us are looking at alternate ways to provide for our retirement. There are a lot of improvements to buildings that can be done that don’t require permits. The Regional Building Code, which you can access through our website, has a list of work that doesn’t require a permit. You’ll want to make sure you do your homework before buying a property to update or renovate. A good rule of thumb, whether your buying a house or a horse if it looks like a great deal you better look at it real close. Researching the history of a property is currently easier than it has ever been. Through our website, www.pprbd.org, you can check the permit history on a property by address. We also have a link to the El Paso County tax assessor’s site. If, for example, the assessors site shows a home with 3 bedrooms, 2 baths and an unfinished basement and the house you are looking at has a finished basement and the garage converted to living space, you will want to check the permit history for the property to see if the work was permitted and inspected. Even if a previous owner performed the work you will inherit the problem as the new owner. There are some cases that the unpermitted work can be permitted after the fact. However, there are cases where the work will never meet the zoning requirements or the building codes and the only solution is to completely remove the constructed violations.

Your husband’s idea may be a good one but please read on. The Building Codes allow the owner of a residential property to be the contractor **only** if the property is or will be your primary residence. For the sake of this article I will assume that your husband is not a licensed contractor. Therefore, if the house(s) you purchase are to be sold rather than inhabited by you and your husband, you would either have to hire a Licensed Contractor to do the work or become a licensed contractor yourself. Becoming a licensed contractor is not some ‘Secret Club’ that is hard to achieve entry into. There are many men and women in El Paso County licensed as general contractors. If either one of you wants to become a licensed contractor you will need to pass the appropriate test and meet the insurance requirements to do so. Becoming a licensed general contractor will allow you to be the contractor remodeling the residential

properties you purchase. You can review and print the contractor applications on our website: www.pprbd.org.

The licensing process takes 6 to 8 weeks, and includes a criminal background check. A contractor's license will have to be approved by the Building Committee. The Building Committee consists of citizens that represent a cross section of the community. There is a Building Contractor, a Banker, a Roofing Contractor, a Plumbing and heating Contractor, a Citizen at large and an Architect to list a few. Two weeks after the Building Committee meets and approves your license the Board of Review then reviews your application to give final approval. We sell the required 2003 ICC codebooks and administer the exams every Tuesday. As the review process stated above suggests, simply passing the exam is not a guarantee that you will be granted a license. Often times a first time contractor may have limits on the number of permits allowed until a track record has been established. This process may sound a little daunting but I assure you it is not as bad as it sounds.

QUESTION: I'm landscaping my yard and was issued a Stop Work Order. Why would I need a permit to landscape my yard?

ANSWER: It's that time of year again when people are getting their yards ready for summer and our inspectors are writing many Stop Work Orders, most commonly for backflow preventers on sprinkling systems. A permit is required for the installation because a backflow preventer provides life/safety protection. The backflow preventer does just what its name implies; it prevents the possible contamination of your domestic water supply from any water trapped in your sprinkler system. The permit for a Backflow device is currently \$30. A landscaping company would need a Water Connected Appliance License to install these devices, so make sure your Landscaping Contractor has the appropriate license to install your sprinkler system. If you as the homeowner install your own Backflow Preventer you can purchase a homeowner permit.

Submit your questions to: terryb@pprbd.org or mail to: Pikes Peak Regional Building Department

2880 International Circle Colorado Springs, CO 80910 Attn. Terry Brunette