



March 1, 2017

Re: Proposed Amendment to ORS 455.715, 455.732 and 455.740-2017 Session - HB 2907

To Whom It May Concern:

The City of Vernonia supports the proposed changes to the definition of “Specialized Building Inspector” proposed in the bill to come before the legislature this session. The bill will correct the mistake that was made in 2013 when the definition was changed to make it almost impossible for small jurisdictions to efficiently operate a building inspection program.

The current law has the effect of limiting the number of certified inspectors available to City and County building departments and unfairly took away certifications earned by inspectors in Oregon. There currently is a vast shortage of qualified inspectors available to timely provide service to public entities and the private construction industry in Oregon. In rural communities especially, the lack of available inspectors drives up permit costs and increases inspection wait time.

Current law arbitrarily sets a double standard for individuals employed by a jurisdiction and those providing the identical service to a local government through a qualified and certified 3rd party contractor. Smaller jurisdictions cannot afford to hire full-time publicly employed inspectors and maintain reasonable building permit fees. Allowing the jurisdictions to contract with certified building inspectors saves public resources and time and guarantees that minimum building codes are being met. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of this in meeting the demand for building inspections in Oregon, especially in smaller cities. The flexibility and costs savings to smaller communities this would allow is essential to responsive implementation of the required building inspection program and to ‘wise budgeting.

The solution to the problem is to amend the above noted sections to change the definition of “Specialized” Building Inspector” in ORS 455.715. The proposed language that I reviewed in HB 2907 would allow jurisdictions to provide efficient and timely response to builders’ needs; increase the availability of certified inspectors; reduce costs and wait times; and standardize rules for building inspectors state wide.

I believe that this proposed change is in the public interest while protecting the integrity of the various adopted Oregon Specialty Codes. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Josette M. Mitchell
City Administrator, City of Vernonia