

**Alternative Technology Review Committee
Meeting Minutes - January 28, 2008**

In Attendance:

Ed Vranizan – CH2M Hill, Architect and LEED AP

Aron Faegre – Aron Faegre & Associates, Architect, Engineer and Landscape Architect

Jennifer Allen – Portland State University/BEST Center (Bio-Economy and Sustainable Technologies)

Andy Peterson – BDS Plan Review/Permitting Services Manager

Hank McDonald – BDS Plan Review Section Manager

Terry Whitehill – BDS Plan Review Section Manager

Jed Scheuermann - BDS Plan Review Section Manager

Lori Graham – BDS Code Development

Debbie Cleek – BDS Green Building Specialist

Discussion:

The meeting began with introductions. BDS described where the idea for an Alternative Technology Review Committee came from (DRAC Green Sub-committee) and generally what the vision of the committee was. BDS indicated that they have been talking to other cities about this idea (SF, Seattle, Chicago) and it does not appear that any other jurisdiction is currently doing something similar. BDS also gave examples of green materials that have had code issues and could benefit from the Committee's review (green insulation products, natural building methods).

AF – Portland is generally more gutsy with their appeals board than other parts of the country in being willing to look at alternative methods and means; but lack of ICC approved testing for materials will be an issue likely to come up often.

HM – We can use other types of testing if it's valid, and the testing parameters were the same.

EV – Design professionals take a risk if they specify an untested material. If a material doesn't work they can be put out of business.

AF – In some cases might be able to rely on other countries (Europe, etc.) that have different, but useful testing systems. There are many products approved by the EU testing systems, but have not been tested per ICC or ASTM standards. If a proposer can find a way to translate between testing systems, that might be helpful.

EV – The public will need to know "what do I need to do to get this product/material approved?"

HM – If a product goes through this process then BDS can consider creating a Code Guide that answers that question.

AF – Historically Portland's appeals have not been about helping new industries get started, which carries more risk than the traditional appeals which are more about solving existing or historic building eccentric conditions. Maybe there would need to be a different approval process that requires follow-up testing. Both observation during construction and periodic testing after occupancy.

EV – Without this builders will not want to use new green technologies. Don't want to assume risk.

TW – We actually see building owners coming to us, asking to use these new technologies. This is similar to what we have seen with the un-vented attics.

JS – Builders want to know it's not a shot in the dark but a calculated risk.

JA – If the building community is looking for more testing maybe there is a role for BEST.

HM – So BEST could do testing of a product after it is installed?

JA – Yes. There would need to be a built-in precautionary factor.

EV – BEST could become the green technology testing center for the country.

HM – By doing product analysis they could become the local equivalent to the ICC. There are a lot of people who would want to take advantage of that.

EV – The places that do fire testing and test steel products are big economic centers for the regions they are in.

HM – This is more than just Portland, all jurisdictions need this testing info, so there is an opportunity to become a big economic center.

DC – In order for BEST to do testing does the product need to be an Oregon grown product or company?

JA – That is a piece of it, but not necessarily, as long as the research includes the universities.

AF – The goal of this new process is not to circumvent normal ICC product testing, it is to encourage innovative technologies that serve a larger purpose. How do you decide what the global environmental benefit of the technology is? What does green mean? There has to be prerequisites that explains why this is a green technology.

JA – Any research done would have to take a 365 degree look and ask broader questions. Can't solve one problem by creating others.

AP – Yes, there would need to be approval criteria for the Committee to consider a technology. Is there more than one application for this technology? And since the "Big Board" would be the final stop, safety is the biggest issue.

HM – Testing of the product may define where the technology can be used. Might not be able to be used in every application.

AP – The Committee could be a clearing house of industry experts. Would need to know who and when to talk to experts about how the technology may function. The timing may be difficult to get these experts to make an assessment.

AF – Part of the success of the existing administrative appeals process is the “fire wall” between the committee and the outside world. You have all of your trusted staff in a room and can talk openly with each other and come to a conclusion as a group. Have you ever brought in outside experts before?

TW – No, right now the appeals board is all city people. But the City does not have the knowledge in green building.

JA – The “black box” approach is not good if you are trying to grow an industry.

AP – The group needs to be more interactive than the appeals board. Work more with the applicant and/or the product representative. But the group would contain someone from the appeals board as well, so they are aware of the preliminary analysis that was done before it got to the appeals board.

EV – Is there an issue with a public entity (the City) pushing a product?

TW – The Committee would be a consortium, representing both public and private parties, so should be ok.

DC – If someone comes to the Committee with a product, but it’s not used in a specific project, what will be the end result of this process. What would they have to show that the City has said it is ok?

TW – You can do a non-project-specific appeal. So the end product would be an approval from the appeals board.

JA – Who would be on this Committee?

TW – Different people depending on the topic

All – Someone in construction, like a contractor. An architect and engineer. Someone from the Codes group. Someone who does product testing like Carlson Testing or PN&L.

AF – They might be able to help hook into the global testing information.

HM – Although those tests often have different understandings. So have to make sure that you are comparing tests that have the same parameters.

JA – BEST might be able to do a contract to compare testing parameters to each other.

DC – How would this process work with the three day appeal process? (Submit by Friday and have your appeal heard by Wednesday.)

AF – It is not really a 3 day process. Usually the designer has spent several months looking at something before they decide to specify it. And they have probably already spent several weeks talking to plan examiners and fire marshal staff in advance for some time about the issue.

HM – I envision this process taking anywhere from 3 days to 12 months depending on what information the applicant comes in with, and if there needs to be more analysis or testing done.

JA – How do we move forward? Need a flow chart that shows how it would work.

HM – There would be three possible outcomes from the analysis:

- 1) Sounds good – move on to appeal board
- 2) Industry experts need to review it further
- 3) More testing is required – send on to the Universities

AP – Steps seem to be, figure out what the screening criteria is (Is it green, etc), establish core group and field of outside experts. Write up draft and refine it.