

BUILDING INSPECTIONS

General Information

Department Head: David Bryant (since 2012)
 Location: Central Permitting Building, 204 East Academy St, Asheboro, NC 27203
 Phone Numbers: Main Number: 336-318-6565
 David Bryant: 336-318-6366 Mobile: 336-736-0810
 Building Inspections: 336-318-6564
 Electrical Inspections: 336-318-6562
 Plumbing/Heating Inspections: 336-318-6563
 Fax: 336-636-7574

Mission

To protect the public safety, health, and general welfare of the citizens and visitors to Randolph County through the administration and enforcement of the NC State Building, Electrical, Mechanical, Plumbing, Energy, and Accessibility Codes.

Summary

Building Inspections issues construction permits for building, electrical, mechanical, plumbing, and insulation work. Inspections are made at various stages of construction. State Law mandates this process and all work is inspected for compliance with the NC State Building Codes and the Randolph County Unified Development Ordinance. All inspectors that work for the department are required to be certified by the NC Code Officials Qualification Board and must complete 6 hours of continuing education in each trade yearly. The Inspection Department is located in the Central Permitting Office Building located at 204 East Academy Street in Asheboro. Office hours are Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Inspectors can be reached between 8 and 9 a.m. and between 4 and 5 p.m. There are 9 positions allocated to this department.

Overview

This department is regulated by NC State Building Codes and is overseen by the NC Department of Insurance. North Carolina has had a State Building Code since 1936. The NC General Assembly, during its 1979 session, mandated that counties and cities with a population of 75,000 or more begin to enforce the State Building Code, effective July 1, 1979. Randolph County did not have a building inspections program at that time, although we had been doing electrical inspections since approximately 1936. In March of 1979, the County Commissioners created the building inspections program and consolidated it with the zoning inspections program. They placed both programs in the Health Department, located on Cox Street, behind the Courthouse. At this time, they also adopted a building permit fee schedule and determined the basis for determining the valuation for building permits. The four inspectors who were hired initially were Bill McDaniel, John Hancock, Larry Trotter and Eugene Havens. The building permit fee schedule has been revised at various times over the years. It was last revised May 1, 2005.

In 1981, the County opened a satellite office for Building Inspections in a County-owned building at 402 Balfour Drive in Archdale. At that time it was manned by one inspector. This office was expanded to ultimately be manned by two permit technicians and three inspectors (one building, one electrical and one plumbing / mechanical). This office was closed in September 2010 due to slow economic conditions.

In April of 1983, Bob Crumley, County Manager, presented an administrative reorganization proposal to the County Commissioners. The reorganization involved creating two new departments: Property Development (including Building Inspections and Planning & Zoning) to be headed by Hal Johnson of the Health Department; and Emergency Services (including Fire Marshal, EMS, and a new position of administrative assistant) which created a new position of Emergency Services Director. The Commissioners approved this reorganization, with the directive that the changes were to be implemented as soon as feasible and practical.

During the 1987-88 budget process, Frank Willis, County Manager, separated Building Inspections and Planning & Zoning into two different departments, effective July 1, 1987. Bill McDaniel was named as Chief Building Inspector and made department head of the newly created Building Inspections Department. Hal Johnson remained department head for Planning & Zoning.

In 1998, Bill McDaniel left Building Inspections to become department head for Public Buildings – Maintenance. Paxton Arthurs was then promoted to department head for Building Inspections. In 2012 Paxton Arthurs left Building Inspections to become Director of Public Works and David Bryant was promoted to Director of Building Inspections.

Service Area: Inspections

Mission

To provide courteous, timely, and accurate inspections of permitted work to ensure compliance with applicable NC State Building Codes and Randolph County’s Unified Development Ordinance.

Summary

The Inspections service area is responsible for providing inspections on new and existing buildings and equipment to ensure compliance with applicable NC State Building Codes and Randolph County’s Unified Development Ordinance. The Inspectors are also tasked with documenting inspection results, maintaining records and reports in accordance with State Law, and providing a continuing informational resource for the general public pertaining to state building code issues. There are a total of 6 full-time inspectors in the County’s jurisdiction. Two of these inspect buildings and structures; two inspect plumbing and mechanical; and two inspect electrical work. Additional inspections are made by the Director and Plan Reviewer. This service area has 6.4 allocated positions.

Operations

During the 2002-03 budget deliberations, the Building Inspections Department was allocated an additional inspector, bringing their number of full-time inspectors up to 9. This additional inspector made it possible for the plan reviewer, who had been assisting with field inspections, to remain in the office to work primarily on plan review. In the spring of 2011, the department experienced a reduction in force, caused by slow economic conditions, which brought the number of full-time inspectors down to 6. Of the six inspectors, two are building inspectors, two are electrical inspectors, and two are plumbing/mechanical inspectors. Three inspectors work the eastern half of the county (East of Hwy 220 Bypass) and three inspectors work the western half (West of Hwy 220 Bypass). From time to time, inspectors who are cross-trained (certified in more than one area) may do an inspection for another inspector (because of uneven workload that day, when two inspections are due at the same job site, etc.) The Plan Reviewer and Department Head also perform inspections on situations that require special attention.

Randolph County Building Inspections does inspections, condemnations, and addresses field complaints for all the municipalities with the exception of the City of Asheboro. The County keeps all the fees collected for permits issued within the municipalities with the exception of complaints. There are no fees generated for complaints.

The main telephone numbers for this department go to an automated attendant, which lists 3 prompts:

- Speak to an inspector (If this prompt is chosen, the caller then chooses which specialty; from that specialty, the caller chooses the individual inspector. Before transferring the caller to that individual, the attendant gives the caller that inspector’s direct number so that future calls will not have to be routed through the automated attendant.)

- Schedule an inspection (These calls automatically go to a technician, although anyone in the department can schedule an inspection.)
- Have a question (These calls automatically go to a technician to either answer the question or forward it to the correct person)

This system was set up because the department was receiving complaints from callers about busy phone lines. Whenever possible, employees distribute business cards that list all inspectors and their direct lines.

Randolph County attempts to conduct all inspections on the same day for requests that are received in the Central Permit Office by 8:30 a.m. Prior to 2005, this cut-off time was 9:00, but that did not allow for last-minute scheduling and inspectors were being delayed in getting out of the office to do their inspections. All inspections requested after 8:30 a.m. will be performed no later than 5:00 p.m. the following working day, if possible. At no time should an inspection fail to be performed within 3 working days from its request. Inspectors are in the office from 8:00-9:00 a.m. and from 4:00-5:00 p.m. to schedule work and to answer questions. Each morning the inspectors collect all requests and schedule their work for that day. They compare their lists to see if there are two inspections scheduled for the same site or to see if one workload is light and another is heavy. They may share or trade work to help each other and to even out the workload.

When a contractor is ready for an inspection, he will notify Inspections, usually by calling. He must give the permit number, the type of inspection he is requesting, and any other pertinent information (time of day the job will be ready, where the key can be found, etc.). The permit number for that project is entered into the computer to generate a worksheet that will include all the information that was keyed in at the time the permit was first issued along with the results of any previous inspections that have been performed. This worksheet is then given to the appropriate inspector as a notice that the job is ready for an inspection.

During the day, each inspector will complete his inspection forms (types of inspections performed, whether approved or rejected, and whether a rejection fee will be charged). At the end of the day, these forms are given to the Inspections Administrative Technician, who keys and scans in the results of inspections into the permitting system.

Inspections are usually done in the following order, although some variations are possible:

- Footings/saw service
- Foundation
- Rough-in for mechanical, plumbing, electrical
- Framing
- Rough-in for insulation
- Final for mechanical, plumbing, electrical (no particular order for these)
- Fire (if commercial), zoning (if applicable)
- Environmental Health (if well/septic or if restaurant or other food service)

At the conclusion of all work done under a permit, the appropriate inspector will make a final inspection. If he finds that the completed work complies with all applicable State and local regulations and with the terms of the permit, he will issue a Certificate of Compliance.

Certifications

The County may hire inspectors who are not certified by the NC Department of Insurance (NCDOI), but they cannot sign off on any work until they apply for and receive a probationary certificate from DOI. The Inspector then has a maximum of two years in which to receive a standard certification. Otherwise, DOI will mail the County Manager and the Inspector a notice that the Inspector may no longer do inspections.

An employee hired without certifications must at least have experience in the field of inspections for which he was hired. He will accompany another inspector in his area until his probationary certificate is granted, generally about 2 weeks, to become familiar with the territory and the work. Even if a new hire has his certification(s), he will ride with another inspector for a few days for orientation.

There are 3 levels of certifications: basic, intermediate, and unlimited. The level of certification determines what size building (both in terms of stories and square footage) an Inspector can inspect. In order to be State-certified for each of the 3 levels, an Inspector must take and pass coursework offered at various community colleges to be eligible to sit for the State exam. There is one course per level, and the community college provides the State with pass/fail information. The State exam is administered by a third party testing company and is offered in various cities throughout the State. If an individual fails the State exam, it may be retaken after a 2 month waiting period. If failed twice, the individual will reapply to retake the college coursework and the State exam.

The County pays the cost of the coursework and of the State exam. Once an Inspector is certified, the County pays an annual fee for the renewal of that certification. The County also pays for the department's membership in each specialty's State association.

Most of our current Inspectors are certified in more than one area and are working on others. In 2002, a State Law was passed that required mobile home inspections to be done by someone who is certified in building, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical inspections.

Service Area: Permitting

Mission

To provide courteous customer service, to respond to citizens, homeowners, and contractors requests for information in a timely manner, to maintain records in accordance with State Law, and to assist the public throughout the permitting process.

Summary

The Permitting service area is responsible for assisting with administrative and financial tasks as well as assisting citizens, homeowners, and contractors throughout the permitting process. Inspection Administrative Technician works in the Asheboro office reviewing all paperwork, maintaining various permitting files, assisting Inspection staff with research and communication drafts, keying and scanning inspection results, reviewing and closing files, issuing various permits, and assisting applicants in this process. This area is the primary duty of one Inspection Administrative Technician. The Department Head spends a portion of his time in this area as well. This service area has 1.40 allocated positions.

Overview

Randolph County is one of the first counties in North Carolina to have a centralized permitting program. This program was written in-house by Computer Services (now Information Technology) staff and initiated in 1991 making the permitting process more convenient and accessible to the public. All permitting is coordinated through a computerized land records and permitting management system. It is designed to streamline the total development permitting process by integrating all development data by parcel number. All levels of county permitting, including zoning, septic tank applications, well applications, building, electrical, plumbing, mechanical (heating and air conditioning), and 911 addressing can be obtained at centrally managed locations. In 2012, the County retired its in-house program and began using a “Logos Community Development System” developed by the New World Company.

State Building Codes

The State Building Codes require building permits for any job that is either over \$15,000 or that involves load-bearing, plumbing, electrical, or mechanical work. Persons acting as general contractors must be licensed to work on projects that are over \$30,000. A property owner may act as the general contractor without a license as long as the building is intended for his own personal use. An unlicensed individual may act as general contractor for a modular home if he obtains a \$5,000 surety bond. Anyone doing plumbing, electrical, or mechanical work must be licensed unless they are doing work on their own home. No license is required for insulation work. Farm buildings outside of municipalities are exempt from the State Building Codes; however the plumbing, electrical and mechanical codes still apply to farm buildings.

Permit Process

The permit process begins with a master development application (MDA), at which time a permit number is assigned. The MDA provides all pertinent information related to a specific parcel of property. Once the MDA is set up, all other permits issued are associated with the original MDA and will use the same permit number.

The zoning permit is issued first, then the septic tank application. The applicant must call Environmental Health to come out to do a soil evaluation for the septic system. If the septic application is approved, Environmental Health gives a clearance letter to the applicant who must present this letter in order to get the building permit. (The actual septic system permit is issued directly to the applicant by Environmental Health.) Once the building permit has been issued, the subcontractors can get the electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and insulation permits. When permits are printed, a receipt is automatically generated. In April of 2013, the County began accepting credit cards. There is a 2.6% convenience fee added by bank for using this service.

A well permit, in most cases, may be obtained during any phase of the construction process. However, there are some areas of the county that have known flow problems. In these cases, the County requires that the well be approved (volume verified) prior to the issuance of a building permit.

There are times when another agency is involved in a building project. Certain documents must be filed and approved before the project can proceed and before any permits can be issued. For instance, when more than one acre of land is disturbed, the applicant must file an erosion control plan with the N.C. Department of Natural Resources. There may be watershed or impervious surface issues involved. Environmental Health must approve floor plans for restaurants. Within a municipality's corporate or extra-territorial zoning jurisdiction, the municipality enforcing zoning regulations must issue a zoning permit and clearance prior to the Central Permit Office's issuance of a building permit.

Near the end of the project, the general contractor may apply for temporary power on the building. Inspections must call the power company to authorize them to provide the temporary power, which is generally for a period of time between 30 and 90 days. If needed, this service can be extended another 30-60 days. Once a week, the Inspections Administrative Technician generates a report that shows temporary power expirations. Those contractors are contacted to determine if they need an extension on the temporary power or if they are ready for final inspections. If they have already received an extension and are not ready for final inspections, Inspections will call the power company to return to the job site and remove the meter.

Permit Fee Schedule

The current permit fee schedule was adopted by the County Commissioners September 6, 2016, effective November 1, 2016. This fee schedule includes information on both residential and commercial buildings along with every kind of work inspectors' encounter. Permits may expire if work is discontinued for an extended period of time.

Prepayment System

In order to accommodate contractors who do not want to come to our office each time they apply for a permit, the County Commissioners approved the use of credit card machines effective April 2013.

The Inspections Administrative Technician does a daily reconciliation of receipts for the permits issued that day.

Mobile Home Permits

For the placement of a mobile home, a set-up permit is issued rather than a building permit. A set-up contractor must be licensed. If the homeowner comes in to get the permit, he must provide the contractor's name and license number. After the set-up permit is issued, the subcontractors (plumbing, electrical, heating and air) can get their permits. A blanket fee of \$150.00 is charged, which includes base permit fees for plumbing, heating, and electrical. Although fees are paid up front, licensed sub-contractors are still required to complete a permit application so that licensing requirements are documented.

Modular Home Permits

For the placement of a modular home, a set-up permit is issued rather than a building permit, and a blanket fee of \$500 is charged, which includes base permit fees for plumbing, heating, and electrical. Although fees are paid up front, licensed sub-contractors are still required to complete a permit application so that licensing requirements are documented.

Service Area: Plan Review

Mission

The mission of the Plan Review area is to ensure plans and specifications are in compliance with the NC State Building Codes prior to construction, by providing a timely and thorough plan review of both commercial and residential projects.

Summary

The Plan Review service area is responsible for reviewing construction drawings, organizing submitted drawings, and guiding applicants in this process. The County has one designated Plan Reviewer. This person reviews all plans except for residential projects, which are reviewed upon request or for special situations. The Department Head spends some of his time on plan review. This service area has 1.20 allocated positions.

Operations

All commercial plans must be approved prior to the issuance of construction permits. If the project is over 2,500 square feet in size or over \$90,000 in value, the plans must be sealed by an Engineer or Architect. On certain large projects, the NC Department of Insurance must also review and approve the plans. Plans must be approved before a building permit is issued. Plan Review is not required on residential projects; however, it is provided as an additional service.

The Plan Reviewer must be certified in all the permit specialty areas in order to review commercial plans. He ensures plans meet all applicable State Building Codes requirements and have been appropriately sealed by an Engineer or Architect. He also makes sure any other requirements such as erosion control, environmental health, DOT, and Zoning Ordinances have been met prior to issuing permits. He may ask other inspectors to review certain aspects of plans for confirmation.

The County requires three sets of plans to be submitted for commercial projects. One set is stamped approved and returned to the customer, one set is retained in the plan review office, and one set is forwarded to the Fire Marshall. The County keeps commercial plans for one year. Plans for government projects are kept permanently.

Since the Plan Reviewer is certified in all permitting areas, he can serve as a backup for the field inspectors. However, most of his spare time is spent in creating informational pamphlets and brochures that answer questions for citizens and giving detailed instructions on such projects as building a deck or a storage building, testing gas lines, etc. As these items are created, they are being added to the department's website.

The Plan Reviewer is also a member of the Property Development Advisory Team, which consists of representatives from Building Inspections, Planning & Zoning, Environmental Health and the Fire Marshal's Office. This team meets with citizens, contractors, and home owners to provide guidance with the rules and regulations pertaining to their proposed project. These meetings are held on Wednesday of each week on an as needed basis.