

JDB CODE SERVICES, INC.

January 5, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter of recommendation for Mr. Jeff A. Blair of the FCRC Consensus Center at Florida State University. As a codes consultant representing construction industry stakeholders such as building and product manufacturers, designers, builders, and code enforcement personnel I have been involved in the development, implementation and ongoing maintenance of the Florida Building Code since its inception in 1998. Prior to beginning my code consultancy I established and managed a codes and standards program for a state-wide association of materials and products producers and manufacturers. Before going into private industry I spent ten years in the public sector serving at various times as the building official for the City of Gainesville, Florida, the Deputy Building Official for the City of Altamonte Springs, Florida, and the Code Enforcement Coordinator for Orange County, Florida. In addition to involvement with the Florida Building Code, I have been involved in code development for decades with the Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI) and subsequently the International Code Congress (ICC).

The Florida Legislature created the Florida Building Commission in 1998 with a directive to develop and implement a single unified statewide building code (the Florida Building Code). Along with many others, I believed previous efforts to implement a unified code for Florida demonstrated the project was doomed to fail. Florida is a large and diverse state with a wide range of stakeholders such as design professionals, code enforcers, contractors, subcontractors, manufacturers, energy and fire interests, insurance interests, and state and local governments representing very different interests. Most often these groups have competing and widely divergent concerns that often appear unresolvable.

When the Florida Building Commission (Commission) began the development of the Florida Building Code (FBC) within a matter of months it became clear that there were many large, complex and controversial issues that had quickly become major roadblocks. This combined with some stakeholders who felt that abandoning the initiative altogether and retaining the status quo was in their best interest created a charged, contentious, and seemingly hopeless scenario for developing the FBC by the legislatively mandated deadline of the year 2000.

At this juncture the agency charged with administering the Florida Building Code, the Florida Department of Community Affairs, contracted with the FCRC Consensus Center at Florida State University to facilitate the code development process. I, along with other experienced stakeholders, was unfamiliar with “facilitated” meetings and was dissatisfied with this decision. We did not see a need for a “new facilitated process” when we knew how to develop codes.

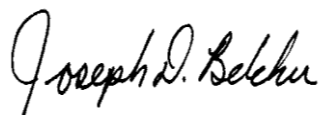
Starting with a special four-day meeting Mr. Jeff A. Blair introduced the Commission to a proposed consensus-building process he designed which included the implementation of a threshold of 75% or greater votes for consensus. The 75% threshold applied to recommendations to the Commission by all appointed committees and to decisions by the Commission affecting the code. Mr. Blair also developed a set of procedural policies and guidelines as a base for the Commission to discuss and consider for adoption. The Commission voted unanimously to adopt the proposed process thereby establishing clear guidelines for the Commission, committees and workgroups appointed by the Commission, and for the public when speaking and interacting on code development issues. The rules were met with resistance at the outset because the 75% threshold seemed high, particularly when considering that up until that point a 51% level of agreement could not be reached on some of the tough issues under discussion.

Mr. Blair facilitated the technical advisory committees, special issue ad hoc committees, stakeholder workgroups and all of the Commission meetings. It became apparent very quickly that the facilitated process was allowing the Commission to engage the controversial issues in a productive manner. Stakeholders were encouraged to be actively involved by providing feedback to the Commission and their committees. In fact, stakeholder access to the process and providing input was actually enhanced due to the organization and facilitation of the process. Soon points of contention on key issues were being discussed, evaluated, consensus-ranked, and ultimately resolved with in most cases a unanimous vote from the Commission. The first edition of the Florida Building Code was unanimously adopted by the Commission and implemented by administrative rule as the 2001 Florida Building Code.

In summary, I have been converted from a complete skeptic to facilitation initially, to a firm believer in the value of facilitation in resolving complex and contentious issues. I have no reservations saying that in my opinion we would not have a Florida Building Code today were it not for the process guidance, neutral handling, and expert facilitation provided by Mr. Jeff A. Blair. Further, we would not have the dependable consensus-based process we continue to enjoy fifteen years after starting the development of the Florida Building Code to update and maintain the code. I, with no reservation whatsoever, highly recommend Jeff Blair to design and facilitate any process requiring agreement on complex and controversial issues between stakeholders with competing and divergent interests. In addition, Mr. Blair understands the industry and regulatory issues and his knowledge and skills in process and facilitation and consensus building greatly enhance his work for the public and private sectors as a consultant providing training, strategic planning, and action implementation plans.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or e-mail using the contact information provided.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph D. Belcher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joseph D. Belcher, President/Owner
JDB Code Services, Inc.