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RIBA: Senate president says she would like to see uniform code enforcement

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"We know the challenges your industry faces, and the General Assembly is trying to help."

That was the word from senate president Teresa Paiva-Weed (D-Newport, Jamestown) in a surprise visit to the Rhode Island Builders Association's board of directors meeting on December 7th.

"Bear in mind that many of the regulatory issues you face are not necessarily at the state level. Many come from the cities and towns," she added. "In the legislature, we are trying to make it easier to do business in Rhode Island."

The board was meeting at Spirito's restaurant in Providence for its annual holiday dinner. Each director paid for his or her own meal.

Sen. Paiva-Weed expressed solidarity with RIBA members in their concerns over high permit fees and long waiting times for approvals, the affordability of health insurance, and the non-uniformity of code interpretations and enforcement across the state.

Asked how well she believes she can work with Lincoln Chafee when he becomes governor in January, the senator said she hopes for the best.

"It's difficult to tell how well he will work with us until he actually takes office. I can say that he's more liberal than I am," Sen. Paiva-Weed said.

In response to another question, the senator said that legislators will "keep struggling" toward uniform interpretation of the fire code and increasingly complex lead-hazard regulations. Asked about pension reform, she said that the General Assembly has already done much to accomplish reform at the state level, but that many municipalities have yet to do so.

Paul Eno is the owner and editor-in-chief of New River Press, Woonsocket and is the editor of the monthly RIBA newsletter, The Rhode Island Builder Report.