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RIBA launches remodelers committee

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The Rhode Island Builders Association's new Remodelers Committee is off and running. Committee co-chairs Joseph Cracco and Tanya Donahue welcomed 25 members to an inaugural meeting at RIBA headquarters on January 23rd. There was a round-table format.

Cracco, president of Modern Yankee Builders, proposed the goals.

"We want to start by creating an open dialogue among our remodeler members. We want to provide access to education for remodelers and even to be a kind of vetting agency for remodelers in our state," Cracco said.

He also suggested that social and networking activities would be well within the scope of the new group. Further ideas came from around the table. Suggestions included monthly or bimonthly speakers with the common theme of "how to produce a better product and still make a good profit."

"We will definitely attract participants if we stick to the idea that what we're doing here will directly help everyone's business," said Donahue, of E.A. McNulty Real Estate.

Future seminar topics will include tax planning for remodelers, contracts and liens, business and retirement planning, legal and legislative updates - all with the theme of helping remodelers improve business. Preparing participants for certifications from the National Association of Home Builders, especially Certified Graduate Remodeler (CGR), also was a top recommendation.

Attendees expressed an interest in mentoring, with the Remodelers Committee as a facilitator to get experienced remodelers together with those just starting out. One participant expressed concern that members would hesitate to share knowledge with possible competitors. As a whole, however, the group indicated that the state has different regions and different remodeling markets, and that the advantages to the industry of a mentoring program far outweigh any disadvantages.

Of the 25 contractors present, 12 said their businesses consist entirely of remodeling. Those attending included two past RIBA presidents, Steven Gianlorenzo and William Baldwin. Toward the end of the meeting, discussion went around the table, with members describing their businesses. Many said that work remains steady.

Cracco stressed the need for RIBA members to get involved with NAHB Remodelers, the national trade group, with annual dues of only \$35.

It was agreed that meetings of RIBA's Remodelers Committee will take place from 6 to 8 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Refreshments will be offered at each session.

The February 27th meeting was to feature Alan Hanbury, CGR, speaking on "The 10 Commandments of Successful Remodelers: Planning for Financial Success in Remodeling."

There will be no March meeting because of the Home Show, but the April 30th meeting has already been planned and will feature a sales and marketing seminar with Betty Galligan of Newbury Public Relations and Marketing. The topic: "Public Relations and Marketing to Bring in New Business, and Sandler Sales Techniques to Help Sell the Work."

On May 28th, the group is scheduled to meet at Clark Corp., 393 Fortune Blvd., Milford, Mass., for a field trip and coordination meeting. The June 25th meeting, back at RIBA headquarters, will tentatively feature a seminar on OSHA safety rules for remodelers, and how to avoid fines.

All members who remodel, even if part time, are urged to be active with the Remodelers Committee. For information, call Cracco at (401) 641-9457 or Donahue at (401) 333-9520.

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