



Legislation Text

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File #: 21-0229, Version: 1

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**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

Waive the first reading and pass the ordinance revising Section 3-5A (Electrical Contractors) of the Naperville Municipal Code to discontinue issuing electrical licenses (requires six positive votes)

**DEPARTMENT:** Transportation, Engineering and Development

**SUBMITTED BY:** Peter Zibble, TED Operations Manager and Shebnem Ozkaptan, Budget and Administrative Services Coordinator

**BOARD/COMMISSION REVIEW:**

Revisions to Title 3 of the Municipal Code do not require Board/Commission review

**BACKGROUND:**

Contractors performing electrical work in the City of Naperville are required to be a licensed electrician. Licenses are issued in accordance with state guidelines by a limited number of local government agencies. Alternately, an electrician is deemed qualified if they hold a valid electrician's certification by the International Code Council (ICC).

The City of Naperville is one of the limited number of local agencies that currently issues electrical licenses. Initially, the City offered an exam and issued new licenses to qualified electricians. In the late 1990s, due to staffing changes and a shift in priorities, the City discontinued proctoring exams and issuing new licenses.

Since that time, the City has allowed license renewals only. Although no new licenses have been issued for more than 20 years, there were approximately 550 active Naperville licenses renewed in 2020.

**DISCUSSION:**

Staff from the City Clerk's Office and the Transportation, Engineering, and Development (TED) Business Group have reviewed policies regarding the licensing of electrical contractors and have two primary concerns:

1. Staff is administering a program that provides limited benefit to the City of Naperville, and
2. Staff can no longer verify the qualifications of the contractors to which licenses are issued.

*Reduction in permits*

Of the over 550 active license holders, fewer and fewer continue to perform work in Naperville. Over the past two years, only 14% of the license holders have obtained permits from the City. The remainder are either not working or working strictly in other municipalities. It is no longer efficient to

continue to dedicate staff time to annual renewals and the processing of payments for so many licenses that are used exclusively outside of Naperville.

#### *Verification of contractor qualifications*

It has become more difficult to continue to verify the qualifications of the contractors that obtain a license. The City is renewing licenses for electricians that have not been tested by examination for over 20 years. During that time, the National Electric Code has been updated seven times and new technologies, such as renewable energy, have become more prevalent. To a certain degree, the City electrical inspectors can provide oversight and help educate license holders while working with them in the field, but with so many license holders no longer working in Naperville this has limited benefit.

#### *Deliberation and validity of Naperville licenses*

Staff considered the option of reinstating the testing program to verify the qualifications of the license holders. But, with hundreds of tests and retests to administer, the City would need to employ a third-party testing service, dedicate more staff time to the process, and increase fees to cover the costs. Although feasible, this is not consistent with industry direction.

Few municipalities in the area still renew electrical licenses and even fewer still offer examinations and issue new licenses. This reflects a shift to the more robust national certification process offered through the International Code Council (ICC). The ICC program is better equipped to educate, proctor examinations, and maintain certifications for electricians. Staff believes that it would be more consistent with current trends to discontinue issuing electrical licenses altogether.

Continuing to renew licenses for electricians for which we provide little to no oversight is at odds with the responsibility of licensure. The City has an obligation to ensure that license holders are qualified not only for work in Naperville, but in other jurisdictions that permit work to be done by Naperville license holders.

It is critical to note that *several local governments/jurisdictions have notified staff that, due to our process, they no longer honor the validity of the City of Naperville electrical license* and require those contractors to re-test at another provider.

#### *Recommendation*

Staff recommends that the City continue the 2021 renewal process for electrical licenses that is in progress, but discontinue the practice starting January 1, 2022. All license holders will be notified upon approval of the ordinance which will allow them the remainder of the year to obtain licensure or certification elsewhere as needed. The language in Section 3-5A of the Naperville Municipal Code regarding licensure would be stricken.

It is important to note that even if Naperville no longer issues electrical licenses, the City still requires that all contractors performing electrical work be licensed by another agency or certified by the ICC. Licensure/certification is verified through an annual registration process maintained by the City Clerk's Office.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

At a current renewal rate of \$25 per license, the City will see a reduction of \$13,750 in fees collected.