



Maine PE News

STATE BOARD OF LICENSURE FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

September 30, 2021

A Farewell to Russ Martin

An organization can only exist with dedicated members who are committed to the mission. This past spring, the Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers lost one of its staunchest advocates when Russ Martin P.E., FNSPE, passed away. Not only was Russ an incredible historian that helped our Board understand the past processes that guided us, but he was always there to provide insight and perspective to any deliberation. His focus was the protection of public health and safety through licensure, and he never turned down an opportunity



to spread the

word at any meeting he was invited to. I spoke to Russ just days before he passed. His thoughts were on the work ahead and what we needed to accomplish in the coming months. His worry was letting others down because of his circumstance, and one thing Russ never did was let others down. We will miss his quiet but firm style that demonstrated how to be a professional at all times. Russ, we thank you for all you gave us, and we will carry on your advocacy. — Brent Bridges, PE

A Thank You to Former Chair, Mandy Holway P.E.

Many of us at the State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers thought Mandy Olver, PE, would continue to lead the board for the next 20 years, effortlessly running meetings, offering perspective, respecting the voices of others, and representing the Maine PE Board nationally at NCEES meetings. However, when the board's most recent request for board member applications brought several highly qualified candidates forward, Mandy felt it was a good time to step away and for new members to add their leadership perspectives. As she heads into her next big adventure, Joyce, Jude, David, Tim and Brent will all miss the leadership that brought us to the Board. We will try to continue her legacy of reason, advocacy, humor and the candor that she brought to the board over the last 12 years. It is easier to follow in the footsteps of a great leader, and for that, we are fortunate. Thank you, Mandy.



RENEWAL OPENS NOV 1

Beginning November 1, 2021, the online renewal link will open for renewals for the 2022-2023 licensure biennium. To renew you click on the “Renew License” link in the lower right of the home page at www.maine.gov/pe.

You will receive an email on November 1 as a reminder to renew, that will also contain the renewal link. Please remember you are obligated by law to keep your contact info updated. Anyone who renews after December 31, 2021 will be charged a \$50 late fee.

When renewing, you attest to having completed the required PDH. Maine has not issue a blanket exemption from PDH requirements due to COVID. The PE Board will consider written individual hardship requests for exemption from PDH requirements as outlined in Maine statute.

Please be sure that you have records sufficient to prove your claimed PDHs, in case of audit. Do not send your log and documentation unless you are audited. The Board audits 1.5% of renewal applications received by December 31, 5% of late renewals received Jan 1 to March 31, and 100% of late renewals received after March 31.

One simple way to maintain your PDH records for 3 years as required under Maine law is to use the free NCEES CPC Registry available through your MyNCEES account. Upload your certificates to the CPC registry and when audited you can transmit all required documents quickly and easily — and you don’t even need to be in your office to do it. The NCEES CPC Registry also helps track license renewal dates and state PDH requirements.

New Chair and Vice Chair of PE Board Elected



Elections of board officers are held at the board meeting each January. This year, Mandy Olver, PE relinquished the gavel and Brent M. Bridges, PE, was elected to serve as Chair, while Joyce Taylor, PE, was elected Vice Chair.

Newly elected Chair Brent M. Bridges, PE, is a Senior Principal at Woodard & Curran. Mr. Bridges graduated from the University of Maine at Orono in 1980 with a BS in Civil Engineering. His decades of experience include water and wastewater infrastructure, site development, permitting, building renovations, and planning studies. He believes in projects that help build strong communities and in connecting with people to engage all perspectives.

Vice Chair Joyce Taylor, PE, takes over that position from Mr. Bridges. She is the chief engineer for the Maine Department of Transportation and is on the board *ex officio*. A 1986 graduate of the University of Maine at Orono with a BS in Chemical Engineering, Ms. Taylor worked at DEP in Hazardous Waste, Lake Protection, and Toxic Use Reduction before joining MaineDOT in 1999. Ms. Taylor worked as an environmental engineer in the construction division and held several key positions, including Bureau Director of Project Development, before becoming Chief Engineer in 2013.



Stakeholders Meeting Discusses Decoupling

At the stakeholders meeting on September 9, 2021, board members discussed decoupling with representatives of the professional societies and Maine engineering firms. Most attendees appeared to be supportive; but we are aware that some engineers are reluctant to support decoupling. We want to speak with you and hear from you.

Decoupling separates the experience requirement from the PE exam, removing a barrier by allowing young engineers to decide for themselves when they are prepared to sit for the PE exam rather than being required to wait a specified amount of time. It does not change or lower the requirements for licensure; applicants must still meet all qualifications and can't be licensed until they have the required experience.

In the past, becoming licensed was fairly linear: Either as an engineering graduate or in senior year request permission to sit for the FE exam, sit for the FE, graduate, apply for certification, work for a specified amount of time, request permission to sit for the PE exam, sit for the PE, pass the PE and get licensed.

When the FE exam went to year-round computer-based testing in 2014, states stopped requiring applications before people took the FE exam. People take the exam senior year or after graduating and then apply for certification with their transcript. Decoupling adapts the same sensible approach to the PE.

Young engineers have frequently shared that after registering for the PE exam they have had to postpone the exam because they were assigned a challenging project, or getting married, or having a baby, or another baby. Present self always seems to assume that future self is going to have more time to study, but if future self could actually say anything to present self they would probably say, "That's not how any of this works."

For most engineers, life gets busier and busier and it gets harder and harder to find time to study for the PE exam. Empowering young engineers to decide for themselves when to take the exam can make a difference in their career, their life, and their ability to impact their community. Being forced to wait can mean that engineers never take the PE exam or get licensed. Why would we choose to hold young engineers back?

Maine needs more professional engineers. Of the 7122 PEs currently licensed in Maine, 2038 report a Maine address. Many companies, including state agencies like MaineDOT, have reported that they could hire more licensed professional engineers. If the pending infrastructure bills pass, that need will grow.

Since Nevada decoupled in 2005, 26 states have decoupled, with more moving to decouple. Two statistics are notable: first, the difference in the pass rate prior to four years or after four years is statistically insignificant; and second, in all decoupled states there is a sustained increase in people taking the PE exam.

We should note that California has always permitted its engineering graduates to sit for the PE exam 2 years after graduation, and Maine, like all other states, has always licensed California exam-takers once they meet the experience requirement.

NCEES has worked on converting the PE exams to computer-based testing for several years, and after this October, all PE exams will be computer-based. The major exams will be year-round, like the FE, and the smaller exams will be offered on one day each year. In 2013, the NCEES revised the Model Law to allow PE applicants to sit for the PE exam when they are ready, rather than completing a specified amount of experience before the PE exam.

The National Society of Professional Engineers in NSPE Position Statement 09-1780, Adopted: July 2017, reads, “It is the position of the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) that Licensing boards and governing jurisdictions should provide the option of taking the Principles and Practice of Engineering exam as soon as an applicant for licensure believes they are prepared to take the exam, and have passed the Fundamentals of Engineering Exam. The applicant upon passing the exam should not be eligible for licensure until meeting all other jurisdictional requirements.”

Of the two arguments against decoupling we most frequently hear, the first is resistance to changing the current process. With discussion and reflection, most people see that this change does not reduce licensure requirements, just the timing of the PE exam. The more serious argument is that since the PE exam is intended to test applied knowledge that people “should not be able to” pass the exam without the required experience. This argument fails to recognize the quantitative differences in individual intelligence and initiative, the types of experience offered to young engineers, as well as the qualitative differences between phenomenal and sub-optimal mentorship and oversight.

The fact is that no two engineers walk the same path. It is simplistic and paternalistic to declare a bright line for when someone “should be” ready to sit for the professional exam. No one is a better judge of their exam readiness than the engineers themselves. The quality of the work experience is a separate matter.

The national American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) published ASCE Policy Statement 547, in which they declare their support for engineering experience as part of the licensure requirements. They refrain from commenting on the timing of examinations: “ASCE believes that, as a prerequisite for licensure and consistent with the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES) Model Law, four years of such progressive experience should be required for those possessing a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree from an Engineering Accreditation Commission (EAC)/ABET, Inc. program, three years for those having a master's in engineering from an institution offering EAC/ABET programs, and two years for those with an earned doctorate in engineering from an institution offering EAC/ABET programs.”

The State Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers supports allowing young engineers to decide when they should sit for the PE exam. The Board also supports a renewed emphasis on the quality of the experience obtained by young engineers. The Board invites you to help ensure that young engineers in Maine gain the quality experience they need to become competent practitioners. Also, please let us know what you and the young engineers you work with think about decoupling at: professional.engineers@maine.gov.

Current PE Board Members

Seat	Name	Position	Seat	Name	Position
1	Vacant	Board Member	4	Brent M. Bridges, PE	Chair
2	Judith R. Pearse, PE	Board Member	5	Mandy Holway, PE	Board Member
3	Joyce Noel Taylor, PE	Vice Chair	6	Vacant	Board Member



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