

Meeting Minutes: Plumbing Board

Date: Feb. 24, 2026

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Minutes by: Lyndy Logan

Location: Minnesota Room, DLI, 443 Lafayette Rd. No., St. Paul, MN 55155

Members

1. Karl Abrahamson (Chair)
2. Sam Arnold
3. Richard Becker
4. Jonathan Lemke (Secretary)
5. Justin Parizek (WebEx)
6. Bruce Pylkas (WebEx)
7. Rick Wahlen
8. Mike Westemeier (DLI CO's Designee)

David Weum (MDH CO's Designee, Non-V)

Members Absent

- Kent Erickson (Vice Chair)
- Adam Johnson
- Shane Willis
- Scott Stewart
- Philip Wood

DLI Staff & Visitors

- Paul Enger (Board Counsel, DLI)
- Ken McGurran (Board Counsel, DLI)
- Sean Callanan (DLI)
- Lyndy Logan (DLI)
- Thomas Eisert (DLI)

DLI Staff & Visitors continued...

- Matthew Flier (DLI) – WebEx
- Brad Jensen (DLI)
- Steve Neubel(DLI) – WebEx
- Charles Olson (DLI)
- John Roehl (DLI)
- Kara Topper (DLI)
- Anita Anderson (MDH) – WebEx
- Lewis Anderson (City of MPLS) – WebEx
- Jason Bethke (City of Blaine) – WebEx
- Brian Black (CISPI) – WebEx
- Ross Bundy (J-Berd Mechanical)
- Brian Fehrenbach (Meeker County) - WebEx
- Eric Gander (Superior Mechanical) – WebEx
- Joel Hansen (MNABC) – WebEx
- Brooke Houle (MLBO) – WebEx
- Lucas Jones (MSA) – WebEx
- Mike Morehouse (City of Northfield) – WebEx
- Angie Peterson (METC) – WebEx
- Jim Peterson (MN PHCC)
- Jarret Purdue (DNR) – WebEx
- David Radziej (MN PHCC)
- Cody Robinson (MPCA) – WebEx
- Adam Swan (UMN) – WebEx
- Liz Thompson (MSA) – WebEx
- Scott Thompson (MPT)

1. Call to Order, Chair

- A. Chair Karl Abrahamson (“Abrahamson”) called the meeting to order at 9:32 AM. Secretary Lemke took roll call, and a quorum was declared with 8 of 13 voting members present in person or via WebEx.
- B. Announcements – Introductions (members and attendees) – Chair Abrahamson
 - Everyone present in person and remotely can hear all discussions.
 - All votes will be taken by roll call if any member attends remotely.
 - All handouts discussed and WebEx instructions are posted on the Board’s website.
 - WebEx instructions/procedures can be found on the board’s website at: <https://www.dli.mn.gov/about-department/boards-and-councils/plumbing-board>

2. Approval of meeting agenda

A motion was made by **Richard Becker (“Becker”)**, seconded by **Rick Wahlen (“Wahlen”)**, to approve the agenda as presented. The roll call vote passed unanimously with 8 votes in favor; the motion carried.

3. Approval of previous meeting minutes

A motion was made by **Wahlen (“Wahlen”)**, seconded by **Becker**, to approve the Jan. 13, 2026, special meeting minutes as presented. The vote passed unanimously with 8 votes in favor; the motion carried.

4. Regular Business

Lyndy Logan will submit expense reports to DLI’s Financial Services.

5. Special Business

A. Variance Request – Liz Thompson

- Lucas Jones, MSA, addressed the board. The state park near Albert Lea plans to decommission its existing stabilization wastewater treatment ponds and connect to the City of Albert Lea’s municipal wastewater system. As part of this transition, the park will reconstruct its RV dump station and is requesting a variance to allow installation of a **trash-separation structure** at the connection point. This request is driven by documented issues with foreign objects—such as bottles, rocks, and tennis balls—being disposed of through the public RV dump station, which poses a significant risk to downstream grinder pumps. Because the site contains sensitive natural and cultural resources, maintenance activities are difficult and often delayed, making protection of mechanical components especially important. The proposed trash-separation structure is intended to reduce equipment wear, minimize maintenance needs, and mitigate operational risks as the park shifts from on-site treatment to a regional wastewater system.
- The board asked whether anyone had reviewed or provided input on a set of drawings that had been sent earlier. A preliminary version had been received, and it was noted that a septic line or septic tank cannot remain in place once a property is connected to the city sewer system, which is what prompted the current concerns. Full plans had not yet been submitted, though they could be requested. As currently shown, the design would not be acceptable. There was also a question about an interceptor mentioned in the documents—specifically, whether it would require construction of a new structure or if the existing septic tank was intended to be repurposed to serve that function.
- The board discussed whether the situation qualifies as needing an interceptor under plumbing code section 1009, which requires interceptors or separators when liquid waste contains materials like grease, oil, sand, solids, or other substances that could harm the drainage system. One participant argues that items such as tennis balls or bottles don’t fall under the type of “solids” the code intends—those are considered incidental debris, not process-generated waste like sand, feathers, or industrial byproducts. Another participant notes that a previous variance was granted only because an existing septic system and old sewer lines needed protection, but in this case, the system is entirely new. Because grinder pumps are designed to break down most materials small enough to pass through the piping, the board member questions whether a variance is justified when a reasonable design solution—such as using a

larger pipe—could address concerns. The overall sentiment is that variances should be reserved for situations where no practical design alternative exists, and that incidental debris does not typically trigger the interceptor requirements intended by section 1009.

- **A motion was made by Becker, seconded by Westemeier, to deny the Request for Variance as presented. The vote passed with 7 in favor and 1 opposed (Wahlen); the motion carried.**

B. RFI PB0223, Section 908.2.2 Horizontal Wet Venting – Scott Thompson

- Scott Thompson addressed the board. Minnesota has long followed the UPC’s method for sizing horizontal wet venting, and the Minnesota Plumbing Code mirrors the UPC unless Minnesota explicitly changes the wording. Mr. Thompson shared his belief that a new interpretation of horizontal wet vent sizing was introduced informally by the board vice chair and then taught in continuing education classes without an official request for interpretation (RFI) or board review. Mr. Thompson described this situation as creating a double standard in which UPC interpretations are accepted only when convenient. The statement emphasizes that Section 908.2.2 of the Minnesota Plumbing Code clearly allows a 2-inch horizontal wet vent for up to four drainage fixture units (DFU) and requires only an increase to 3 inches at five DFU, without requiring the entire wet vent to be upsized back to the dry vent—unlike circuit venting, where the code explicitly requires full-size sizing throughout. It also notes that the recent two-year code cycle never raised this issue, yet it is now being reconsidered without proper process. The conclusion asserts that the code language is clear, the UPC and MPC are aligned, and any change in interpretation must occur through formal board action rather than informal reinterpretation. Mr. Thompson asked when sizing a horizontal wet vent, do we have to increase the horizontal wet vent to a 3-inch all the way back to the dry vent served when we exceed 5 drainage fixture units?
- The board explained that although the Minnesota Plumbing Code incorporates portions of the UPC, it is a distinct code, and only the Minnesota Plumbing Board—not IAPMO—has the statutory authority to issue binding interpretations. The board also questioned the suggestion that members had been influencing one another’s views, noting that no such discussions had occurred and no one had attempted to sway anyone’s opinion. Turning to its interpretation, the board stated that the wet vent must be full-sized from the water closet connection up to the dry vent connection. In the board’s view, section 908.2.2 requires sizing the wet vent based on the total fixture units entering the entire wet-vented section, not on individual pipe segments. Because the wet vent runs from the dry vent connection to the water closet connection, once the total fixture units reach five or more, the entire wet vent must be 3 inches—a standard some members of the board have consistently applied in design practice.
- A wet-vented drainage system should keep the vent path the same diameter as the water-closet line because the air needed to maintain neutral pressure must match the volume of water flowing through the pipe. Using typical fixture-unit flow rates, it converts expected drainage flow into cubic feet per minute of air that must enter through the dry-vent connection. Since the system is designed to limit pressure differentials to about one inch of water column, any restriction in the air path increases pressure drop. When the wet vent is reduced—for example, from 3 inches down to 2 inches—the available cross-section for airflow shrinks, and the pressure drop per foot rises significantly, especially when that smaller section must supply air for the entire fixture group. From an engineering standpoint, this leads to the conclusion that the wet vent should remain full-size from the water-closet connection up to the dry-vent tie-in to ensure adequate airflow and stable system pressure for all connected fixtures.

- A motion was made by Becker, seconded by Westemeier, to respond to the RFI as follows: The horizontal wet vent shall be sized for its entire length based upon sizing requirements in Section 908.2.2. The vote passed with 7 in favor and 1 abstention (Abrahamson); the motion carried.
- **Request for Interpretation Question:** When sizing horizontal wet venting and increasing from four drainage fixture units to five drainage fixture units, is the horizontal wet vent required to be 3 inches back to the dry vent served? **Answer: The horizontal wet vent shall be sized for its entire length based upon sizing requirements in Section 908.2.2.**

C. RFI PB0225, Section 908.2.2 Size – Brian Fehrenbach

- A motion was made by Becker, seconded by Lemke, to respond to the RFI as follows: The horizontal wet vent shall be sized for its entire length based upon sizing requirements in Section 908.2.2. The vote passed with 7 in favor and 1 abstention (Abrahamson); the motion carried.
- **Request for Interpretation Question:** When sizing horizontal wet venting and increasing from four drainage fixture units to five drainage fixture units, is the horizontal wet vent required to be 3 inches back to the dry vent served?
- **Answer: The horizontal wet vent shall be sized for its entire length based upon sizing requirements in Section 908.2.2.**

D. RFA PB0226, Section 909.1 General – Karl Abrahamson

- A motion was made by Becker, seconded by Arnold, to accept RFA PB0226 as presented. The vote passed unanimously with 8 votes in favor; the motion carried.

E. RFA PB0227, Section 812.1 – Cody Robinson

Tabled until the March 17th meeting – MPCA will bring forward a revised RFA and will discuss with Bruce Pylkas and other board members

- **812.1 General. Exception:** In residential dwellings served by a subsurface sewage treatment system regulated under Minnesota Rules, chapter 7080, the discharge from clear water producing equipment, including but not limited to water softeners, reverse osmosis systems, iron or manganese treatment units, and furnace or appliance condensate, shall be allowable to discharge through an indirect waste receptor that is independent of the building drain and building sewer. If this exception is exercised, such discharge shall be conveyed to an exterior place of disposal or separate subsurface discharge method that is not connected to the subsurface sewage treatment system, provided the method and location of disposal are acceptable to the Authority Having Jurisdiction and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. This exception shall not be construed to permit the discharge of sewage or other wastes required to enter the building's sanitary drainage system.
- Cody Robinson addressed the board. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) guidance on managing clear-water waste streams—such as water softener discharge, reverse osmosis reject water, iron or manganese filter backwash, and furnace condensate—now appears to conflict with the Minnesota Plumbing Code. MPCA has long recommended separating these non-sewage waste streams from septic systems because they can shorten system life, increase hydraulic loading, alter tank chemistry, or, in the case of iron filters, rapidly clog drain fields and cause premature failure. However, recent discussions at

the Minnesota Onsite Wastewater Association conference highlighted that the Plumbing Code requires these waste streams to enter the building drain, effectively prohibiting the separate discharge approach MPCA has been advising since at least 2014. To resolve this inconsistency, the speaker proposes adding language to the Plumbing Code that would allow residential properties served by subsurface sewage treatment systems (SSTS) to route clear-water wastes to an indirect waste receptor and discharge them outside the septic system, provided the local government and MPCA approve the disposal method. This would create an optional, not mandatory, pathway for homeowners to protect their septic systems without violating plumbing requirements.

- Mr. Robinson also notes growing pressure to prohibit iron filter discharge to septic systems entirely and raises a related issue: industrial waste streams—such as those from cannabis processing facilities—also need clear separation from domestic sewage, and similar code flexibility may be needed. He concluded by inviting discussion from the Plumbing Board on how best to align the Plumbing Code with MPCA’s environmental protection goals.
- Board discussion: PFAS-removal systems are increasingly common, but the waste they generate—especially backwash from RO, iron/manganese, or anion-exchange units—creates a concentrated PFAS stream with no clear regulatory home. Minnesota regulators acknowledge the problem but don’t yet have a defined approach for handling these decentralized discharges. MPCA is still studying how PFAS behaves in septic systems and soils, and it remains unclear whether PFAS found in wells originates from septic effluent or from legacy groundwater contamination, particularly in areas like the East Metro. Because the science is still developing, MPCA is prioritizing upstream PFAS reduction through Amara’s Law and encouraging filtration for affected households, but it is not ready to incorporate PFAS-specific requirements into the plumbing code. The agency expects to revisit the issue once ongoing research clarifies how PFAS moves through treatment systems and waste streams.

6. Open Forum

None

7. Announcements

Regular meetings are held at 9:30 a.m. on the 3rd Tuesday of each quarter. All meetings are held at DLI with a WebEx option. The following regular and special meetings have been scheduled as follows:

- **Special:** Tuesday, March 17, 2026, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Regular: April 21, 2026
- Regular: July 21, 2026
- Regular: Oct. 26, 2026

8. Adjournment

A motion was made by Becker, seconded by Westemeier, to adjourn the meeting at 11:38 a.m. The vote was unanimous, with 8 votes in favor of the motion; the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Lemke

Jonathan Lemke, Secretary

Plumbing Board Minutes