

Fines imposed on most firms that are out of business

CHARLESTON – State regulators imposed \$9,750 in fines against manufactured housing contractors and retail locations Thursday, but agreed to forgive an addition \$500 in fines against two first-time retail violators.

The West Virginia Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Board levied its heaviest fines -- \$1,000 each – against companies that have gone out of business. That list included \$4,000 in fines against J&J Homes Inc. of Morgantown and fines of \$1,000 apiece against three other defunct contractors.

Board member Steve Solomon of Morgantown successfully argued to have the board rescind staff-proposed fines of \$250 each against retailers in New Martinsville and Berkeley Springs because of their otherwise exemplary records. Each was cited for using unlicensed contractors in their work. They were given reprimands, as was a retailer from Covington, Va., cited for the same violation.

Additional violations aimed at the others included failure to install a home in accordance with state or federal standards and one involved a misappropriation of funds.

Another 17 companies were fined \$75 each for failing to file quarterly reports on time.

The board refused to lift a cease and desist order it had issued against Frank Fato of Buckhannon for allegedly trying to sell a factory-built home while he had not obtained a state license. His attorney argued it was a private sale and not subject to state scrutiny. The panel reprimanded eight additional companies for operation without a state license.

A retail dealership license was issued to Plaza Contracting Inc. of Princeton, doing business as Pikeview Mobile Home Sales.

Contractor licenses were issued by the board to: DA Construction of Montrose; Rock Ridge Builders Inc. of Jackson, Ohio; Premier Decorating & Painting of Grafton; and TW Construction of Grafton.

The board was told the recovery fund set up by the industry to reimburse consumers harmed by companies that have gone out of business is at \$1.4 million. The board approved a payment of \$945 from that fund to William and Marlene Dewitt because J&J Homes Inc. allegedly failed to provide them two items they purchased before J&J went out of business.

The board was told the staff was proposing no legislative initiatives when lawmakers meet in January.

The board's next meeting was scheduled for 10 a.m. March 20 in Charleston.