

Shelby County Briefs: Committee adopts building code minus seismic requirements

By Linda A. Moore

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A Shelby County Commission committee voted today on second reading to approve the adoption of the 2012 Edition of the International Code Council Building Code, minus the new seismic requirements.

The approval from the land use, planning, transportation and codes committee came despite recommendations from experts with the West Tennessee Structural Engineers Association and the University of Memphis Earthquake Research Center, who said the updated seismic requirements can potentially save lives and money.

The county's administrative staff had recommended that the new code be adopted, excluding the seismic requirement, giving those in the building community time to petition the Tennessee Legislature for relief on the seismic requirements on a state level. The new seismic requirements would be addressed next year by the county commission.

Builders have said that those new mandates would significantly increase the cost to construct or remodel a building, and could subsequently discourage development.

However, the experts, including structural engineer Julie Furr said there are financial disadvantages in not updating the seismic code that include higher interest rates for U.S. Small Business Administration loans and higher insurance costs.

The full commission will vote on the measure on Monday.

Reform Advisory Board approved

The general government committee of the Shelby County Commission approved the nomination and appointment of a 13-member Election Reform Advisory Board, a body that would review election processes here and make recommendations to the county.

The members include Commissioner Steve Basar, Memphis City Councilman Shea Flinn and election commissioners Norma Lester and Steve Stamson.

One of the citizen members is Steve Ross, a local blogger who first discovered the early voting irregularities in the Aug. 2 election that resulted in thousands of Shelby County voters receiving the wrong ballots.