

State official to aid local governments with compliance with new building codes

By **JIM DINO**

jimdino@standardspeaker.com

A state official will help local municipalities decide what to do in light of new building codes that go into effect next year.

And the Mountain Council of Governments (MCOG) is going to call a meeting shortly after 2004 begins to see if there is still interest in forming a regional police department.

Bob Skulsky, the MCOG's executive director, said he has asked the Governor's Center for a peer consultant to assist MCOG members in deciding if they want to opt in, or out, of state inspectors doing local building inspection, hire a local person, or hire a third-party firm with the expertise to do the inspections.

Joe Krumsky, from the Governor's Center, said his office is considering the best peer consultant that is available.

Krumsky also noted the interest of 11 of the MCOG's 14 member municipalities "helped the letter gain favorable response," he said.

The new codes will require inspectors to be certified, and the certification is not only time-consuming, but costly. It is widely

believed only full-time inspectors will be certified.

The MCOG has been talking about hiring an inspector or inspectors to do the work. Municipalities have talked about sharing inspectors. If municipalities opt for third-party inspection, they would have no control over the fees – the same situation that would exist if the inspections were left up to the state.

Krumsky said according to the Pennsylvania Bulletin, the new, more stringent building codes will go into effect between April and June of next year.

Meanwhile, on the regional police manner, MCOG members decided to call a special meeting sometime in January to see if newly-elected officials of member municipalities would be interested in pursuing formation of a regional department.

The committee had whittled down the interested municipalities to the City of Hazleton, and Hazle and Butler townships.

But the committee stopped meeting, and the idea was put on a back burner.

But with the recent downsizing of several local departments, the committee wants to see if there is renewed interest in the idea.