

A Funny Thing Happened.....

“I went to court on a citation I had written to a individual for Parking his motor vehicle on a property not zoned for motor vehicle sales, When the individual came to court he pled “No Contest “ before the judge which says he did not deny doing it. The Judge fined him 20.00 and deferred the ticket 6 months so it would not go on his record, all was well then this Outstanding Citizen began to argue about how much the fine was and during the conversation the Judge was advised that this individual had been given a Warning violation 2 days before on the same vehicle and had then just moved it to another location, with this in mind the Judge asked him if he knew he could not display the vehicle at this location and he stated “Yes but I just didn’t think I would get caught” after this statement the Judge overturned his decision and fined this Citizen 55.00 plus court cost, which ended up costing him \$185.00. Moral of this story KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT WHEN THE GOING GETS GOOD.”

Bill Bridges, Ponca City, OK



Forget Waldo! Where’s Mr. Chihuahua?
This photograph was taken on a recent property clean up in Norman, Oklahoma. The resident tried to convince Janita Hatley that there was really no problem with the property. Can you find the Chihuahua? He’s really there!

Save The Date!

The Annual Spring Conference will be held in Broken Arrow on February 26th and 27th, 2009. More information will be posted at www.oceassociation.com when it becomes available.

Please Be Careful

To submit stories or information to this newsletter please contact Barbara Burlingame at burlingam@aol.com or Barbara.burlingame@normanok.gov

This article appeared in the Denver Post on November 14, 2008.

AURORA, CO — Police are searching for a gunman who shot and killed an unarmed Aurora code-enforcement officer as he was investigating a routine complaint Thursday. The shooter was inside an apartment building in the 1900 block of Clinton Street when Officer Rodney Morales, 40, entered. The teen assailant opened fire on Morales almost immediately, shooting him several times in the torso, Aurora Police Chief Dan Oates said. "This was a cold-blooded killing," Oates said.

Update: The accused shooter has since been captured and charged with the murder of Officer Morales.

At the November OCEA Officers Meeting, officers decided in an unanimous vote to donate \$100 to the Officer Morales Memorial Fund.

Code Certification ... The Oklahoma Story

**Submitted by Andy Templeton
President, Oklahoma Code Enforcement Association**

At 12:01 a.m. on Nov. 1, 2008, new state legislation went into effect in Oklahoma requiring all city employees enforcing public nuisance codes to receive certification training. For most employees, this means a three-day "basic code class" sponsored by the Oklahoma Code Enforcement Association. Alternatively, certification can be recognized from a model code organization, a vocational school curriculum or a college program.

It was the culmination of a two-year lobbying effort by OCEA officers, and more than a decade of planning and preparation. There wasn't much time for celebration, however, since the new mandate brings a whole new set of challenges with it.

"This was a major accomplishment for code enforcement in a primarily rural state that often has a live and let live attitude," said Terry Humphrey, City of Edmond, OK, who worked tirelessly on OCEA's behalf to shepherd the legislation to passage. "It was also a milestone for our organization and its mission to raise the bar for code officers and bring more uniformity to enforcement throughout the state."

This success story has its roots in the early days of OCEA. The founding officers and those who took an active role in the early years were faced with a decision. Would OCEA be a fraternal organization where members conferred regularly to hear words of encouragement and swap war stories? Or, would OCEA's mission grow to include a formal educational component?

Both arguments had merit. OCEA was filling a niche of public nuisance code enforcement left void by other model code groups. It equated to a bunch of guys sitting around a room and telling tales of a unique profession in its infancy. A lot of learning was done through these sessions – what to do and, more importantly, what not to do to get people to mow their yards, clean up their trash and haul off their junk cars.

By the late 1990s, however, OCEA leaders realized form had to be put with function. Working with an Oklahoma City-area vocational-technical school, a five-day curriculum was prepared to train code officers in the fundamentals of state law, constitutional allowances, communication skills, conflict resolution and other aspects of code enforcement. The first code class certified by OCEA and the vo-tech program graduated in the fall of 1998 after completing five consecutive Fridays of training.

A flurry of classes happened after that to get many of the state's code officers certified. The curriculum was revised in 2000, and the class was shortened to three consecutive days to reduce travel time. Each class trained 20 to 30 officers – many of them new to the profession as code

enforcement programs and the OCEA roster expanded from just larger cities to towns with just a few thousand in population.

The legislative push began in early 2007 with OCEA preparing the text of what would eventually become House Bill 2674. A key house member carried the water, and the bill made it through the full house. It subsequently sank in the Senate. By early 2008, OCEA had secured the support of the state's league of cities organization. This was no small task as the league's governing committee for this type of legislation was made up primarily of building officials.

From there, OCEA officers attended every committee meeting to answer questions and give legislators comfort that this was good legislation. The argument often went like this: "Ladies and gentleman, I can tear your house down. And right now, I'm not required by state law to have any training to know the correct way to do that." The bill easily passed the house and sailed through the Senate. Gov. Brad Henry signed it into law without question or concern. Now comes the hard part. The frequency of code classes will have to be increased to accommodate more attendees. Always relying on instructors from within OCEA may no longer be feasible. The current curriculum was last revised around 2000 to a more practical three-day format. However, it is technologically outdated and needs refreshed in an electronic era. Both tasks are being done in preparation for 2009.

Then there's the enforcement component. The legislation specifically left out any grandfather clause. OCEA's position has been to leave an officer's certification status to the discretion of individual city attorneys. Those who have not taken the basic code class may soon find themselves working at their peril.

And, there's now talk of continuing education requirements. Although not included in the legislation, it is a logical next step. Also, there may be other areas where OCEA should focus. The organization developed a two-day property maintenance class several years ago and may look at a more formal training program for zoning enforcement.

Those who worked on OCEA's legislation are justifiably proud. However, they also realize that their work needs continual follow-up.

"We are fortunate that OCEA has officers and members who are dedicated to making this effort a success," Humphrey said. "We realize there are plenty of challenges that lie ahead, but sitting still is not an option in an ever changing environment where code enforcement is taking on more significance for our cities in Oklahoma large and small."