88R2250 MP-D

By:  Goodwin H.B. No. 152

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the authority of certain counties to adopt and enforce a wildland-urban interface code.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  The heading to Subchapter C, Chapter 233, Local Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER C. FIRE AND WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE CODES [~~CODE~~] IN UNINCORPORATED AREA

SECTION 2.  Subchapter C, Chapter 233, Local Government Code, is amended by adding Section 233.0611 to read as follows:

Sec. 233.0611.  AUTHORITY TO ADOPT AND ENFORCE WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE CODE. (a) The commissioners court of a county with a population of one million or more may adopt a wildland-urban interface code and rules necessary to administer and enforce the wildland-urban interface code.

(b)  Except as provided by Subsection (d), a wildland-urban interface code adopted under this section must:

(1)  conform to the International Wildland-Urban Interface Code, as published by the International Code Council, as the code existed on May 1, 2023; or

(2)  establish protective measures that exceed the standards of the code described by Subdivision (1).

(c)  A wildland-urban interface code adopted under this section:

(1)  may apply only in the unincorporated area of the county; and

(2)  may apply to only a portion of the unincorporated area of the county.

(d)  A wildland-urban interface code adopted under this section may not require the use of a building product or material that is not readily available in this state.

(e)  A commissioners court may adopt:

(1)  local amendments to a wildland-urban interface code and procedures for adopting those amendments; and

(2)  later editions of a wildland-urban interface code described by Subsection (b)(1).

(f)  The commissioners court and any municipality in the county may contract with one another for the administration and enforcement of the county's wildland-urban interface code.

(g)  To the extent of any conflict between a wildland-urban interface code adopted under this section and a fire code adopted by an emergency services district under Section 775.036, Health and Safety Code, the more stringent provision prevails.

(h)  A wildland-urban interface code does not apply to an industrial facility having a fire brigade that conforms to requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

(i)  The commissioners court shall:

(1)  publish notice of the proposed adoption or amendment of a wildland-urban interface code under this section in a conspicuous location on the county's Internet website at least 30 days before the date of the adoption of or amendment to the code;

(2)  as provided by Section 551.007, Government Code, allow public testimony regarding the adoption or amendment of a wildland-urban interface code under this section before formal action by the commissioners court; and

(3)  make a reasonable effort to encourage public comment from persons affected by the adoption or amendment of a wildland-urban interface code under this section.

SECTION 3.  Sections 233.063(a) and (c), Local Government Code, are amended to read as follows:

(a)  A person may not construct or substantially improve a building subject to a code adopted under this subchapter [~~described by Section 233.062(a)~~] in an unincorporated area of the county unless the person obtains a building permit issued in accordance with this subchapter.

(c)  Within 30 days after the date the commissioners court receives an application and fee in accordance with Subsection (b), the commissioners court shall:

(1)  issue the permit if the plan complies with the applicable codes adopted under this subchapter [~~fire code~~]; or

(2)  deny the permit if the plan does not comply with the applicable codes adopted under this subchapter [~~fire code~~].

SECTION 4.  Sections 233.064(a), (d), (f), (g), and (h), Local Government Code, are amended to read as follows:

(a)  The county shall inspect a building subject to this subchapter to determine whether the building complies with the applicable codes adopted under this subchapter [~~fire code~~].

(d)  On or before the date that construction or substantial improvement of a building subject to this subchapter is completed, the owner of the building shall request in writing that the county inspect the building for compliance with the applicable codes [~~fire code~~].

(f)  The county shall issue a final certificate of compliance to the owner of a building inspected under this section if the inspector determines, after an inspection of the completed building, that the building complies with the applicable codes [~~fire code~~]. For a building or complex of buildings involving phased completion or build-out, the county may issue a partial certificate of compliance for any portion of the building or complex the inspector determines is in substantial compliance with the applicable codes [~~fire code~~].

(g)  If the inspector determines, after an inspection of the completed building, that the building does not comply with the applicable codes [~~fire code~~], the county may:

(1)  deny the certificate of compliance; or

(2)  issue a conditional or partial certificate of compliance and allow the building to be occupied.

(h)  A county that issues a conditional certificate of compliance under Subsection (g) shall notify the owner of the building of the violations of the applicable codes [~~fire code~~] and establish a reasonable time to remedy the violations. A county may revoke a conditional certificate of compliance if the owner does not remedy the violations within the time specified on the conditional certificate of compliance.

SECTION 5.  Sections 233.065(c) and (d), Local Government Code, are amended to read as follows:

(c)  The county shall deposit fees received under this subchapter in a special fund in the county treasury, and money in that fund may be used only for the administration and enforcement of a [~~the fire~~] code adopted under this subchapter.

(d)  The fee for an [~~a fire code~~] inspection under this subchapter must be reasonable and reflect the approximate cost of the inspection personnel, materials, and administrative overhead.

SECTION 6.  Section 233.066, Local Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 233.066.  INJUNCTION. The appropriate attorney representing the county in the district court may seek injunctive relief to prevent the violation or threatened violation of a [~~the fire~~] code adopted under this subchapter.

SECTION 7.  Section 233.067(a), Local Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(a)  The appropriate attorney representing the county in civil cases may file a civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction to recover from a person who violates a [~~the fire~~] code adopted under this subchapter a civil penalty in an amount not to exceed $200 for each day on which the violation exists. In determining the amount of the penalty, the court shall consider the seriousness of the violation.

SECTION 8.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.