



Permitting and Inspections Department

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Permit Reform Advisory Committee

Wednesday September 15, 2021
Draft Meeting Minutes

Location: 645 Pine Street & Virtual

Committee Members present: Celia Daly, Steve Lipkin, Steve Offenhartz, Bob Duncan, Tiki-Jon Archambeau
Staff: Bill Ward, Director
Pat Schmitz, Project Manager

Meeting called to order at 3:03 p.m.

Motion to amend the agenda by Bob Duncan to add Item 3a to discuss committee organization and Chair status. Seconded by Tiki Archambeau. Approval was unanimous.

Motion to approve the amended agenda by Steve Offenhartz and seconded by Bob Duncan. Approval was unanimous.

Motion to approve the minutes from the prior meeting was made by Steve Offenhartz and seconded by Bob Duncan. Approval was unanimous.

Item 3) No members of the public in attendance.

Item 3a) There was a group discussion on the makeup of the committee to include any missing members. The committee originally had a member of the planning commission but no longer has an active member of the planning commission. There was agreement that we should continue to work on the question "should we fill the Planning Commission position on the committee."

Tiki was wondering about his continued participation since he is no longer a member of the Public Works Commission. He noted that he is interested in remaining on the committee but would not take offense if others felt he should be replaced by an active member of the DPW Commission. Bob Duncan noted he welcomed Tiki's continued participation and asked that we confirm the original resolution language to confirm the required makeup of the committee. Celia said she will confirm the resolution language and Bill said he would confirm intent of the Mayor's office.

Celia Daly noted that she had been chair of the committee since the initial meeting and asked the group to discuss voting to change the committee roles if there was interest. Tiki noted that the current structure had worked well with Celia as the Chair and Steve Offenhartz as the vice-char. Others confirmed a similar feeling. Celia added that we would have a vote on committee leadership on the next agenda to give members time to think it over.



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Item 4)

Bill Ward gave an update on the Permitting and Inspections Department for 2021. The update included the staffing vacancies and the transition from the AMANDA permit database to the Opengov permitting software. Highlights included customer service lobby visits dropping by about 75% and in-person payments have been reduced by 90% with the new on-line permitting system.

Bob Duncan gave an example of his experience with the opengov system and noted it went very well except for the permit fee not showing up immediately as an amount due. Bill noted that the zoning permits are set up to have an initial review by staff to confirm the application details before the zoning fee is determined.

Bob also mentioned that customers uploading documents individually into opengov could be more efficient if they could be uploaded as one. Staff agreed to look into options for that.

Tiki asked if building electrification is forecast to create a large increase in electrical inspector's already busy workload. Bill explained that the trades team is meeting next week with that issue as an agenda item. Some of the heat pump technology could be easily inspected by the plumbing/mechanical inspector with a checklist of electrical items that need to be documented. More information will be available at the next meeting.

Item 5) The types of trades permits that might be eliminated were discussed. Bill added that the list was a draft that could be reduced or expanded based on committee review. Celia sent the committee members the draft list on July 28th.

Celia asked if there was a list of what items require a building permit. Bill answered that such a list would be quite lengthy because it would be for any repair or alteration that is less than \$1,000. Steve Offenhartz asked if we were considering increasing that amount. Bill said we could look at annual cost of living changes and come back with an updated dollar figure.

Bob asked about details of the draft item "kitchen remodel with no structural work". He noted that there could be issues like removing cabinets with lead paint that could cross with other requirements. He noted that similarly, siding a house is the perfect time to consider insulation so in both cases there could be guidance beyond no permit being required. Bill said that Opengov could help us with those concerns by adding help text for the customer that indicates, "no permit required but keep in mind EPA and VT lead laws" or No siding permit required, see the attached tip sheet on best practices for insulation". Once decisions are made on what permits might be eliminated, specific help text could be added to the permitting software.

Celia let everyone know we would recirculate the draft list of permits considered for elimination.

The committee selected October 20th at 3:00 p.m. as their next meeting date.

Bob Duncan made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Steve Offenhartz. The vote was unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.