



REPORT TO MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

DATE: April 1, 2008

SUBJECT: Receive a status report on “Business Friendly” actions that the Community Development Department has implemented and to approve two revised and two new Job Descriptions for the Building Division.

Report in Brief

The Community Development Department has been implementing a series of changes to improve the customer service and efficiency of the overall development review process. One of the improvements involves a restructuring of the Building Division (with a net loss of one authorized position) along with the creation of two new job descriptions.

Staff recommends that the City Council receive this report, offer any feedback to the Community Development Department, and approve revisions in the job descriptions for Building Inspector I/II and Senior Building Inspector; and approve new job descriptions for Senior Building Plans Examiner and Building Inspection Services Manager.

Background

The City Council has directed that the City become more “**Business Friendly**” in its dealings with the community. To help implement this directive, the City has undertaken a coordinated effort to reevaluate the way development related services are provided. The goal is to have a streamlined, coordinated, fast and predictable development services program that provides efficient review of project applications in a manner that meets the definition of success for both the City and the applicant. For the developer/applicant, success is defined by receiving clear instructions for submitting project applications; confidence that the applications will be reviewed by City staff in a fair, consistent and timely manner; a collaborative approach to resolving project issues; and setting conditions of approval that will improve their project for the benefit of the community. For the City, success is defined as completed public and private projects that meet stated City Council policies and goals and provide excellent amenities to the community. Additionally, the Community Development Department is striving for an identifiable overall increase in customer service and satisfaction.

While the changes are still a work in progress, the following is a listing of some of the modifications that have taken or are in the process of taking place:

Improving the Development Review Process

Community Development Department staff has been working to improve our internal “Development Review Process”. Internal meetings with staff from throughout the City occur every two weeks to conduct reviews on proposed and actual applications. A project manager (typically from the Planning Division) is now assigned to be a project manager to guide the proposal through the City process. The City’s Economic Development Manager also participates in these meetings to identify any internal obstacles and to be an advocate for projects. Staff is trying to take a more proactive approach in identifying and dealing with potential issues before they overwhelm the processing of a project.

Integrating the Development Engineering Team into the Community Development Department

The former Public Works Department Development Engineering team has been reassigned to the Community Development Department. Staff has been working to fully integrate the Development Engineering Division into the workings of the Department. In addition to full participation as part of the Development Review Process, staff from Development Engineering is now closely working with the Building Division in building permit review, issuance and final sign off. Also, a representative of the Development Engineering Division is now available as a resource at Planning Commission meetings. Additional effort and progress still needs to be achieved in this area.

Integrating Economic Development into the Community Development Department

Community Development Department staff is working to develop an economic development approach, which includes business retention, expansion and attraction, as part of a standard approach in all of its activities.

Improving Old and Developing New Business Processes

The Community Development Department is reviewing and improving upon existing development processes, such as when and how a building permit is issued. Staff will also be developing additional standardized processes to improve the efficiency and operation of the Development Services function of the City.

Conducting Public Training on Various Building Code Issues

A new Building Code became effective for the City on January 1, 2008. The Building Division (sometimes jointly with Yolo County) has held a number of training seminars for small contractors and homeowners on various aspects of the code. These seminars have been well received by the public and will continue as needed.

Opening up the Front Counter Area

The front office area of the Community Development Department has been redesigned to be more customer friendly. The old Police Department bullet proof glass has been removed and a new counter area has been added.

Being Open during the Lunch Hour

Internal staffing has been rescheduled so that the Department is now open during the lunch hour to better serve the public.

Designating a Spring Lake Planner

A senior level Planning Division staff member has been recently assigned to be the “Spring Lake” planner. This “principal planner” position will allow a single high level person to be designated as Project Manager for this very important development. It will be this person’s responsibility to proactively manage and coordinate all aspects of the Spring Lake development.

Increased Training and Cross Training of Staff

Community Development Department staff is starting to cross train so that we can provide enhanced services to the public. Additionally, cross training allows staff to better understand the big picture and better understand the responsibilities of other department and city staff.

Implemented changes to Business Licenses

Community Development Department staff has implemented changes regarding the issuance of Business Licenses. Previously, no matter when the Business License was issued, it expired on June 30th. Now, Business Licenses expire a full 12 months after issuance. In addition to providing a longer term for the Business License holder, this change will smooth out the work flow throughout the year (not all Business Licenses will need to be renewed at the same time).

Increased emphasis on Code Enforcement

Community Development Department staff has placed an increased emphasis on Code Enforcement. Performance objectives for following up on and closing out complaints have been established. In the future, Code Enforcement will be conducting proactive enforcement and conducting business outreach, including scheduling informational workshops on various topics.

Staff believes that the foregoing changes have improved the operation of the Community Development Department. However, additional changes are necessary to further improve the development process and move projects from application to completion. The following section discusses specific changes proposed for the Building Division that staff believes will improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Discussion

Changes to Building Division Staffing and Operation

Community Development Department senior staff and particularly the Chief Building Official have completed review and evaluation of the operations of the Building Division. Staff is recommending comprehensive changes to improve efficiency, customer service, the quality of plans and plan review, and cost effectiveness.

The proposed reorganization requires a change in certain job descriptions and the creation of two new job descriptions. Even though two new job categories are being recommended, the reorganization will result in one fewer Building Inspector position.

In summary, the reorganization will eliminate one vacant Building Inspector position and one vacant Community Development Technician position and add a new Senior Building Plans Examiner position. The plans examiner function performs the technical aspects of plan review with assistance from the building inspection and the permit technician staff. The plans examiner supports all aspects of plan review that includes; issuing permits, answering code related items on the phone, by e-mail, at the public counter, or at site locations. Currently the plan check process is being filled, in varying degree, by an on-site contract position three days a week and an off-site plan review consultant for both structural and non-structural review depending upon work load and the complexity of the project.

There will also be a realignment of existing staff to fill a newly created Building Inspection Services Manager position. This position would coordinate the building inspection process and provide backup to all permit processes. This is an advanced position and is distinguished from the Senior Inspector position and the Plans Examiner position by its full comprehension of the Building Division processes. This position provides direct supervision over the building inspection staff, the permit technician staff, and the administrative staff. The manager also ensures the proper training of inspection personnel. This training involves work procedures, safety practices, and reviews of inspection staff procedures. This position would oversee all aspects of the Building Division.

The creation of the Senior Building Plans Examiner and Building Inspection Services Manager positions will address some critical points:

1. **Customer Service**—both positions will be focused upon this issue. The greatest failing of off-site plan checking is the lack of customer service. Process issues will be reviewed and improved upon once the plan checker is on board. The Manager position will focus on information—training, hand-outs, web-site and integration of the various aspects of the division so that each process is working together.
2. **Cost savings**—having the plan check on-site will save approximately \$60,000 annually. Also, if a large project comes our way, staff will be able to expedite the plan check process in order to meet customer and City expectations. This flexibility is not always available through contractual services.

3. **Quality of plans and plan review**—with an on-site plan checker, the applicant gets a significantly higher quality plan review. Options become available because critical issues can be dealt with immediately and not have to wait for the consultant to forward comments. At times an analysis of a submittal can be performed at the counter by the plan checker and save the applicant considerable time and money if there is some missing component or other documentation issue that still needs attention.
4. **Efficiency**— time will be saved with the inspection manager overseeing all aspects of their development and performance. Use of the inspection staff for multiple job functions because of cross-training will increase. Having an inspection manager ensures problem issues are handled quickly. Training will enhance responsiveness and bring a high degree of consistency among inspectors which will benefit the public with the speed and consistency of inspection.

These and many other benefits will produce a highly efficient building division.

The primary revision to the **Building Inspector I/II** job description updates the Essential Functions section, provides the correct reporting structure to the Senior Building Inspector, and corrects the qualifications section to provide the correct work experience level and certifications. This job description was last updated in 1999. There is no change in salary and the Woodland City Employees Association (WCEA) has approved the changes to the job description.

The primary revision to the **Senior Building Inspector** job description provides the correct reporting structure to the proposed Building Inspection Services Manager, and corrects the qualifications section to ensure the correct certifications. There is no change in salary and the Woodland City Employees Association (WCEA) has approved the changes to the job description.

The proposed job description for **Senior Building Plans Examiner** establishes the specific duties and qualifications for this new classification. The main responsibilities for this classification includes receiving and checking plans and designs for complex structures, and new and remodeled commercial, industrial and residential buildings to ensure compliance with governing codes, ordinances, and regulations; assists inspectors, contractors, design professionals and the public regarding construction requirements; and provides expert technical and professional assistance to the Chief Building Official. The proposed pay range for Senior Building Plans Examiner is GS 58 (\$4618.61 – 5613.94 monthly). The Woodland City Employees Association (WCEA) has approved the job description and salary.

The proposed job description for **Building Inspection Services Manager** establishes the specific duties and qualifications for this new classification. The main responsibilities for this classification includes assisting the Chief Building Official in planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, evaluating, and supervising the activities and staff of the Building Inspection Division; to coordinate, oversee and participate in plan checking operations; and to develop and provide comprehensive training programs for divisional staff. The proposed pay range for Building Inspection Services Manager is MM 132 (\$5614.06 – 6823.93 monthly). The Mid-Management Association did provide

comment and does not support this new job description due to the lack of a Bachelors' degree. However, our comp cities also do not require a four year degree for this classification and therefore the City of Woodland will use the industry standard for this classification.

Fiscal Impact

Staff believes that the previously implemented changes within the Community Development Department have improved efficiency and effectiveness associated with the development process.

The proposed reorganization of the Building Division and the net reduction of an authorized position will provide an additional positive impact to the General Fund. The personnel savings will be approximately \$35,000/year. In addition to the personnel savings, with an on-site Senior Building Plans Examiner, the City will be able to retain the Plan Check revenue estimated at \$60,000; these fees have been used to purchase plan check services from consultants and contractors. Therefore, the net positive impact associated with the proposed reorganization is \$95,000 annually for FY 2008-09.

Public Contact

Posting of the City Council agenda.

Alternative Courses of Action

1. Receive this report, offer any feedback to the Community Development Department, and approve the revisions in the job descriptions for Building Inspector I/II and Senior Building Inspector; and approve new job descriptions for Senior Building Plans Examiner and Building Inspection Services Manager.
2. Receive this report and offer any feedback and further direction to the Community Development Department and not approve the job descriptions.

Recommendation for Action

Staff recommends that the City Council approve Alternative No. 1.

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Job Description Attachments