



OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC# 218-2015

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Philip Levine and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

DATE: May 26, 2015

SUBJECT: **Update on Planning Department Service Initiatives**

In early 2014, the Planning Department, reorganized under new leadership, began to implement new processes and procedures, as well as undertake a number of different initiatives designed to expedite, streamline and improve overall customer service. In addition to its regulatory functions as part of the Building Permit review process, the Planning Department is also responsible for staffing and administering the City's four major Land Use Boards: Historic Preservation, Design Review, Planning and the Board of Adjustment, as well providing staff support for the Land Use Committee.

The following is a summary and status update of the key initiatives underway. These initiatives are intended to provide better services to our customers, improve and streamline work-flows and foster a better work environment for Planning staff:

NOVUS Agenda

The City is in the process of transitioning to an electronic agenda system called NOVUS, which will streamline and automate many of the manual steps needed to produce an agenda. The Planning Department will use this software to manage Land Use Board applications. The department has mapped and outlined all the agenda processes through to review by the City Attorney and Assistant City Manager. Currently the department is waiting for NOVUS to build in "tracked changes" to facilitate revisions as the documents travel through the hierarchy of reviewers and approvers. The "tracked changes" option is now in the testing phase and should be available for validation by the City in early June.

EnerGov

The City is in the process of implementing a new permitting and financial system. The permitting module called EnerGov will replace Permits Plus. This new software will also automate the board application process and permit plan review. Once implemented Building, Planning, Fire and Public Works will be reviewing and approving permits concurrently expediting the review process. Planning has mapped and refined the Land Use Board processes, including pre-application meetings, submittals, final submittals, etc., as well as the Planning Department's process in the overall Building Permit protocol and minor work that does not require a Building Permit. In addition, the entire BCU and BTR process is being refined and integrated into ONE system to avoid duplicity and erroneous information.

Electronic Paint Permits

In an effort to facilitate the process of obtaining a Paint Permit for our residents, Planning is in the process of developing an E-App to generate Paint Permits online. This will allow the applicants to obtain a Paint Permit if they choose one body and one trim color from the pre-approved lists. If they need to use additional trim colors or a color not found in our preapproved list, the applicant will have to come to the department for review and approval. This project is nearing completion and is expected to be deployed by the end of July

Data Storage and Access

The Planning Department has been restructuring the manner and location for records and files for some time. A big part of this process has been compiling, inventorying and scanning documents so they can be accessible and easily searched. This will include establishing a data bank for internal use, as well as making it available to the public. This data will also be uploaded to EnerGov at the parcel level and will be available to Planning staff when reviewing a permit or taking an application for a board.

Best Buddies

Earlier this year the City Administration announced that the City would be partnering with the Best Buddies organization to provide employment opportunities to their members. William Blachar (Billy) has joined the Planning Department and is assigned to assist with records management and clerical support. Billy is a great addition to the team and is always eager to learn new tasks and responsibilities. We are very proud that Planning was the first department in City Hall to participate in the Best Buddies program and will look for new opportunities to expand the department's participation in the program.

Historic Preservation App

The Planning Department is in the process of updating the Historic Preservation webpage and creating a phone App to enhance and showcase the City's historic resources. The goal is to create an application that identifies historic resources, gives a brief description and history of the district and provides photographs of historic properties. Planning will also be including a "Near Me" feature, which will allow individuals to find historic resources close to their locations.

E-Recording

Planning has been working with the IT Department and the County to implement electronic recording for Land Use Board orders. This will expedite the completion of the Board Application process by allowing Planning staff to record final orders in minutes. Upon implementation, the department will have control of these documents and the applicants can obtain the recorded order from the City website or the County Clerk. Additionally, recorded orders will be loaded to NOVUS to complete the electronic file and make it accessible to the public.

Public Records Requests and Records Management-

Once NOVUS is implemented and operational, the general public will be able to obtain copies of documents in a board application by downloading them directly from the site. This is expected to significantly reduce the volume of public records requests (PRR), as the information can be retrieved directly from the City website. For those requests where the documents are in boxes, we will continue to retrieve them from storage and after the PRR is satisfied, the box will be sent out for scanning. The scanned documents will be made part of the parcel history in EnerGov or be made available in an electronic format if the content is not parcel specific. Over time, the goal is bring back the 1000+ boxes from remote storage and scan them.

Standardizing Documents required for Board Submittals and Zoning Information

All documents necessary for Planning staff to evaluate board applications and building plans have been substantially refined, including checklists for board submittals. All forms are expected to be online and at the Building and Zoning permit counters by early June.

Update to Fee Schedule

The department is in the process of analyzing and updating Planning's fee schedule for both Board Applications and Plans review. It has been over 10 years since the fees were reviewed and the current fees are not commensurate with the actual costs of tasks. The Administration expects to have a recommendation for the Commission on a revised fee schedule by September.

Fee In Lieu of Parking

While this is an ongoing effort, Planning staff has created a calculation sheet that applies the highly complex code section for parking to development programs in order to identify deficiencies and collect fees due to the City. For the first time in the program's history, inspections of businesses were conducted last year and we were able to verify conditions on site. The Planning Department has presented their findings to the City Commission, and continues to advise the Finance Committee and Audit Committee. Additionally, invoices will be sent out by June 1, 2015 for the FY15-16 year on time as required by Code. There is not enough time or paper to document the countless hours Planning staff has dedicated to cleaning up and fixing this program and everything accomplished to date could not have been done without an extraordinary amount of hard work and dedication.

Banyan Park and Monument Island-

As part of its commitment to internal service, the Planning Department created a master plan for the Par 3 course and for the restoration of Monument Island. The department worked diligently on both initiatives and while the restoration of Monument Island is on hold for the moment, the Par 3 ("Banyan Park") has been presented to several boards, committees and the City Commission. It was also the subject of an article published in the Miami Herald with great reviews. The Planning Department continues to refine the design and will work together with Parks and CIP as the project moves into design development and construction.

Within a short period of time the Planning Department has modified and streamlined their processes, increased planning and administrative staff and reassigned responsibilities to better serve both internal and external customers with particular emphasis on consistency and improved delivery of services. Over the last 18 months there has been a marked increase in board submittals, as well as permit review applications at the counter and drop-off, yet the department has been able to keep pace every step of the way. This is a strong testament to the dedication and work ethic of all of the members of the Planning Department staff.

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C: Raul Aguila, City Attorney
Rafael Granado, City Clerk