

City of Jacksonville

117 W Duval St
Jacksonville, FL 32202



Meeting Minutes

Monday, June 14, 2021

12:00 PM

Council Chambers 1st Floor, City Hall

Special Committee on Assessing the City's Building and Development Permitting Processes

*Randy White, Chair
Michael Boylan
Garrett Dennis*

Meeting Convened: 12:02 pm Meeting Adjourned: 1:17 pm

Attendance:

Council Members Randy White (Chair), Michael Boylan, Garrett Dennis

Also: Rep. Tracie Davis (Zoom); Tommy Carter – Council Auditor's Office; Colleen Hampsey – Council Research Division; Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Bill Killingsworth, Ellen Cavin, Josh Gideon – Planning and Development Department; Eric Grantham – Council Support Services; Jesse Spradley and Curtis Hart – Northeast Florida Builders Association; Tom Goldsbury – Subject Matter Expert/Retired Chief of Building Inspection

Agenda Discussion

CM White welcomed the group, called for introductions, and said that the first action for the meeting would be a presentation from Josh Gideon, Chief of Building Inspection.

Mr. Gideon said that the presentation would aim to answer the questions that arose in the previous meeting and would cover: the Building Inspection Division Organizational Chart, number of building permits, number of completed plan reviews, increases in small project plan reviews, permit work flow process chart, changes in processes due to statute changes, industry concerns and next steps.

Building Inspection Division Organizational Chart-

According to the presentation, the Building Inspection Division has a staff of 108, 60 percent of which work in "the field", and 18 of whom are plan examiners.

Number of building permits issued-

Mr. Gideon spoke about the number of building permits issued in 2020, there were 5463 for new single family homes/townhomes, and 16,868 total residential building permits were issued. In 2004, there were 6101, in 2005 there were 8360, and in 2019 there were 4209. In 2020, 34 percent of residential permits were for new buildings, as compared to 53 percent in 2005.

Number of completed plan reviews-

In 2019, there were 21,581 plan reviews and in 2020 there were 23,696 (includes residential and commercial). The numbers for completed plan reviews can be misleading since some projects are reviewed multiple times (13 percent of permits have 3 or more reviews).

Increases in small project plan reviews-

There was a 50 percent increase in small project plan reviews in 2020 there were 5803, 4150 in 2019, 4290 in 2018, 4042 in 2017. The increase is attributed to remodeling projects during the pandemic/work from home time. In the past there was an option for walk in service for small project reviews, until the office closures during the COVID pandemic.

Permit work flow process chart-

The approval of a building permit has many steps and layers, and requires more than simple compliance with Florida Codes. There are multiple agencies involved and federal, state and local regulations, and fire codes and ordinances. Mr. Gideon was asked about Master plan permitting for multi home developments, to streamline the process. He said that each home parcel has subtle differences making individual reviews necessary and he said that master plan permitting is somewhat archaic with electronic submissions.

State Statute changes-

The group discussed various state statute changes that will go into effect October 1. The changes include: 30 business day deadline for one and two family homes, with penalties; 10 business days for resubmissions, penalties; 10 business days for sufficiency review of applications; 45 business days for review of some small commercial permits, cannot request copies of contracts to validate job costs. There were concerns that if contracts are shared as proof of job costs for fee assessment, it affects the builder's privacy in the bid process because the contract becomes a public record. There will also be new time deadlines for submission and revisions with enforcement/penalty mechanisms for compliance.

Industry suggestions-

Mr. Gideon said that they are considering offering walk in service for small plan reviews one day per week (possibly by July 15), and that the current volume back log is 2 weeks long. When asked if permits may be routed to specific reviewers, Mr. Gideon said that with the work load volume that would be very difficult. It was asked whether resubmissions can be prioritized, Mr. Gideon said that resubmissions are placed back in queue in the order in which received. Mr. Gideon also said that they are working to incorporate other industry concerns into their procedures, such as clearly articulated timelines, status updates, consistency, reducing the amount of new comments on subsequent reviews and a revision of master plan procedures.

Next steps-

The staff is creating consistency checklists for uniformity in plan review and the permit process, and working to utilize a gatekeeping process internally, with the goal to reduce wait times. They will also strive to improve customer experiences, establish dashboards and improve reporting tools.

They discussed staff deficiency, in that the examiners are working overtime and four more plan examiners are needed. Mr. Spradley asked about funding salaries with trust fund monies. Bill Killingsworth, Director of Planning and Development, said that council just approved increasing their employee cap by 4 positions, and that when they tried to fill spots with contract workers from a staffing agency, they were unable to find candidates with the right training/skills.

The next meeting will be August 2, 2021 to assess the effectiveness of changes made in the Building Inspection Department processes.

Public Comment

Mr. Meadows spoke about false assumptions of wrongness in plan reviews, and about functional workflow systems - process, proficiency and production. He submitted a letter with his comment, on file.

Ms. Hoffman talked about extended delays for commercial permits and poor communication from the Planning Department. CM White invited her to sit on the dais next meeting.

Ms. Tappouni offered her assistance in improving the permit process and will be in attendance at the next meeting.

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research
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