

PERMIT CENTERS

Description

The Department of Community Development, better known as the Permit Centers, is a convenient “one-stop shop” for residents seeking community development services including permits and applications. The Department has two locations referred to as the Permit Center-East and the Permit Center-West. The Permit Center-East has been in service since 1989. Due to the success of the eastern location, services were expanded to a western location that opened in April 2001. The Permit Centers are staffed by representatives from Building Inspections, Planning, Public Utilities, and Public Works.

- To assist the public with questions concerning the agendas and processes of the Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals.
- To provide a streamlined development review process at a convenient location.
- To accurately track, monitor, and administer the costs of providing these services in order to provide them in a cost efficient manner.

Objectives

- To consistently provide quality services to all citizens and customers in a professional, accurate, and efficient manner.
- To assist the public – including private citizens, builders, developers, and engineers – with their permitting and licensing needs.
- To provide information to the public concerning the requirements and regulations related to zoning and subdivisions of property, building construction, and other aspects of the development process.

Budget Highlights

The one-stop convenience at both the East and West locations simplifies the process for obtaining permits for the customer and improves overall service levels. Services provided include the processing of building permits and answering inquiries regarding code regulations, zoning, water/sewer availability, as well as road and drainage issues.

Staff is utilized from Building Inspections, Public Works, Public Utilities, and Planning. Funds to pay for staff serving these functions are in the Permits Centers’ budget and complement. Four staff members included in the complement have their personnel expenditures reimbursed, via interdepartmental transfer, by the appropriate department related to the

Annual Fiscal Plan

| <u>Description</u> | <u>FY14 Actual</u> | <u>FY15 Original</u> | <u>FY16 Approved</u> | <u>Change 15 to 16</u> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Personnel | \$ 1,057,546 | \$ 1,057,928 | \$ 1,092,530 | 3.3% |
| Operation | 16,231 | 20,165 | 18,815 | (6.7%) |
| Capital | 100 | 6,150 | 7,500 | 22.0% |
| Sub-Total | <u>\$ 1,073,877</u> | <u>\$ 1,084,243</u> | <u>\$ 1,118,845</u> | <u>3.2%</u> |
| Interdepartmental Billings | <u>(239,628)</u> | <u>(234,613)</u> | <u>(245,247)</u> * | <u>4.5%</u> |
| Total Budget | <u>\$ 834,249</u> | <u>\$ 849,630</u> | <u>\$ 873,598</u> | <u>2.8%</u> |
| Personnel Complement ⁽¹⁾ | 16 | 16 | 16 | 0 |

*Reflects the reimbursement of four positions (2 Public Works; 2 Public Utilities) assigned to the Permit Center, which are reflected in the Permit Centers' personnel complement.

Permit Centers (cont'd)

Performance Measures

| | FY14 | FY15 | FY16 | Change 15 to 16 |
|------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------------------|
| Workload Measures | | | | |
| Total Number of Inquiries | 15,278 | 22,920 | 23,378 | 458 |
| Permit Applications Received | 5,085 | 5,075 | 5,177 | 102 |
| Reviews Performed | 10,930 | 10,923 | 11,141 | 218 |
| Business Licenses Reviewed | 3,730 | 3,501 | 3,571 | 70 |

services furnished. Those reimbursements for FY2015-16 will be from the Public Works and Public Utilities departments. The sum of these reimbursements, totaling \$245,247, is shown as a negative amount in the Permit Centers' budget.

The Permit Centers' budget for FY2015-16 is \$873,598, which is an increase of \$23,968, or 2.8 percent from the prior year approved budget. The personnel portion of the budget is increasing \$34,602 or 3.3 percent. The personnel increase is partially offset by a corresponding increase in departmental billings resulting in the total budgetary increase of \$23,968.

The operating portion of the budget is decreasing \$1,350, or 6.7 percent, which has been offset by an increase in the capital outlay portion of the budget by an identical amount. The increase in capital outlay of \$1,350 is being utilized to continue to make needed furniture and fixture replacements used by the public, as well as to invest in a digital scanner to retain electronic copies of business license applications and supporting materials as they pertain to zoning ordinance compliance, thereby streamlining the document retention process.

The Permit Centers were designed to make it more convenient to process and approve a permit at a central location. Technology was one of the driving forces to accomplish this process through the use of the Geographic Information System (GIS) and the Tidemark software system. Now, when a resident

or builder enters the Permit Centers, they can leave with an approved permit for additions, decks, and accessory structures in one hour or less. Customers can also have copies of maps within fifteen minutes. The department continues to evaluate areas to improve operational efficiencies as an ongoing effort toward continual service improvement. For example, the department has implemented new management practices to make the staff more flexible in responding to citizens' request for assistance. In addition, regular staff rotations have continued between the East and West Permit Centers, allowing junior staff the opportunity to experience a wider variety of public service environments, hone and exercise leadership skills and practice supervisory techniques. Also, the department continues to work closely with cooperating agencies through consultation with their counterparts to ensure that customer assistance is being provided consistent with established policies, regulations and interpretation.

In an effort to increase employee engagement and job satisfaction, a policy was established allowing technicians to shadow employees in other departments whose missions align with the overall objectives of the Permit Centers, and are of personal and professional interest to the technicians. This effort has broadened the scope of technicians' understanding of services delivered by cooperating agencies, increasing employee morale and contributing to a more comprehensive perspective of the Permit Centers' processes and enhanced customer service.