

Mayor Castor's Advisory Teams
Development Services Advisory Team – Chair Julia Mandell
Thursday, August 8, 2019 at 10:00 A.M. - Meeting #3
Tampa Police Department – Headquarters
411 Franklin Street – 5th Floor
Tampa, Florida 33602

Advisory Members present: Chair Julia Mandell, Lakshmi Shenoy, John Diaz, Mike Loomis, Charlie Rollins, Fred Hames, Andy Scaglione, Rhea Law, Carroll Ann Bennett, Chase Collier, Meredith Freeman, Roberto Torres, Joe Samnik, Jennifer Motsinger, and Andrea Zelman.

Transition Team and staff present: Co-Chair Sonya Little, Co-Chair Harry Cohen, Chief of Staff John Bennett, City Attorney Gina Grimes, Assistant City Attorney II Kristin Mora, Assistant City Attorney I Jerrod Simpson, Director of Planning and Development Thom Snelling, Planning, Design & Development Coordinator Catherine Coyle, Professional Plans Review Supervisor Dave Jennings, Chief Construction Inspector Troy Chavez, Legislative Aide Annette Antinori Hall, and City Clerk Support Technician Karencia Ciagala.

Transition Lead Carole Post welcomed and thanked team members for the feedback they had provided since the last meeting. She reported that their input had been synthesized into several key points that the group would review and discuss today. Ms. Post introduced Attorney **Andrea Zelman** as a new member of the transition support team who would be helping to write the final report.

Team Chair Julia Mandell asked members and the public to introduce themselves. She discussed the desire to review and discuss the feedback received from the advisory team members, and the intention to work toward a goal where the department would seek to find its way to 'yes' within its regulatory authority. She stated that at this meeting they would not be able to take public comments, but encouraged anyone to submit input online at the T3 site.

Progress Update

C. Post provided a brief update on progress to date, noting that the department is not waiting until the advisory team concludes its efforts before implementing incremental and low-hanging improvements. With an eye toward having a set of recommendations in late September, there is much work to do.

First, was the introduction of a series of free, public **Accela** system training classes which was an early suggestion of the advisory team. The first session is scheduled for August 21, 2019 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at 1400 N. Boulevard. These training sessions will be ongoing and held throughout the city.

Second, was the efforts of the T & I team to begin refreshing and updating web content and navigation for the most frequently used/visited planning and development pages on **tampagov.net**.

Third, was an update on efforts to more aggressively recruit and backfill vacancies, including engaging professional recruiters for key positions like the construction services/CBO role. There was also a focus on recruiting client facilitators at development services.

Finally, was an update on the ongoing TBBA Government Affairs Committee Meetings done in concert with the planning and development staff, the next scheduled for August 13, 2019. **Jennifer Motsinger** stated that the **Tampa Bay Builders Association** (TBBA) holds public meetings every 2nd Tuesday of the month at the development services building, on the third floor (1400 Boulevard North). The public is able to interact with staff and find out how to make improvements. The information provided is about policy and process, independent of a project. They also hold these same types of meetings in Pasco County.

Ms. Post then asked Advisory Team Member **Carroll Ann Bennett** to update the team on some feedback she had from the prior meeting but time had run out. Ms. Bennett stated that she is a member of a coalition representing several neighborhoods that have concerns and the first concern is regarding sidewalk safety. She is reaching out to Catherine Coyle in regards to assessing relevant parts of the code. She would also like to find out where funding comes from for this, and how much it is. She expressed concerns about how things are handled relative to pedestrians and sidewalk safety. She also raised concerns about emergency evacuation from parts of South Tampa, a narrow peninsula with a population of 86,000 (2018). The comprehensive plan requires an annual review to monitor the impact hurricanes have and the city needs to make sure this is happening.

Ms. Post agreed that these are critical issues that need to be addressed, more likely suitable for the forthcoming Sustainability and Resiliency Team. Chief of Staff Bennett also agreed to take some of the matters offline.

Focus Area Discussions

Ms. Post then invited the group to renew discussions on several key ideas/suggestions that had surfaced from the prior meetings and form individual feedback. **Chair Mandell** led the discussion.

Conditional Approvals

Some examples of conditional approvals mentioned were site preparation and tree removals. Because these are often separate issues, handling the matters separately could speed up a project. Types of conditional approvals needed to be determined that could expedite processing. Tree legislation recently passed on the state level; the group briefly discussed the implications for addressing tree issues separate from other parts of the permitting process, including arborist certification classes which are yet to get underway because of workload and staffing issues.

City Attorney Gina Grimes stated that Assistant City Attorneys **Jerrod Simpson** and **Kristin Mora**, that work with land development issues, will research how the new legislation is interpreted and should be implemented and provide the information for the next meeting.

It was agreed that there are many complexities to granting conditional approvals, including when approvals are required from different departments reviewing an application as well as outside entities, e.g. FAA – however, the City needed to challenge itself to seek opportunities for improvement, pilot ideas, and new approaches. It was suggested that appointing an ombudsmen to oversee a project could expedite the process.

Dave Jennings clarified that when applicants apply for projects, sometimes they apply for the entire project, which limits the City from processing one aspect and letting others move forward. Training applicants to determine which process is best for their needs and possibly adding additional reviews/options to the program would help to streamline the process. Some areas of concern would be flood zones, tenant build outs, exceeding the value of project, and permit deadlines. It was agreed that the department needed to clarify the one-stop filing process from the multi-part filing process, and provide nimble paths for both approaches. This would likely become a recommendation.

Thom Snelling stated the city must do a better job at communicating to get the message out as to what Development Services can do. Conditional approvals are a great idea, and possibly changing the code so that Variance Review Board (VRB) can approve some changes might help.

Express Permitting

Cathy Coyle explained that the department currently offers some express permitting that usually has a one-day turn around. With building permitting and vertical construction, the option to separate project is there but may cost more. Another delay to processing may be human error, as while helping in-house applicants, staff may not see online flow-chart approvals needed by them to forward the projects onward to the next step.

Dave Jennings explained that currently he has seven two-person teams to do an entire project. They have a 10-day window; they load every day; try to get going in five to seven days, and it does not happen all the time. Clients are dropping in and loading in changes daily. On remodel and trade style permits that are not structural, the department is looking to expand the list of filing types eligible for an express type permit.

Mike Loomis wants to keep human interaction in the process and **Rhea Law** suggested that some individual activities could bypass the review process.

Carole Post stated that a walk-in express permitting function exists and needs clarification:

- 1) How can we make this function effective based on expectation and needs.
- 2) How to take advantage of our digitized world and maintain a human element.
- 3) Need to clarify and be able to separate routine from the complex for processing.

Best Practices

Sonya Little wants to make sure that internal and external training is included in this process.

Thom Snelling explained how the client facilitators are typically engaged, and the need to have more of them. He is working with Human Resources on the hiring process to expedite hiring critical staff.

Gina Grimes stated that small businesses using architects and contractors should not have to hire an attorney just to go through this process.

Comments from city staff in attendance agreed that in order to help the person in front of them, they need to empower the intake processors with more administrative authority.

The online experience vs. in the office experience needs a review by staff to determine where we can improve the customer service component.

Sonya Little stated that this all goes back to changing the culture internally, to empower the city team to move forward. Starting with communication to develop training (internally and externally); training the industry we serve to understand what services are available and how to process them.

Jennifer Motsinger (TBBA) said better communication is needed and that we all need to understand (the process) if we are going to move forward together.

The group agreed to continue to provide individual feedback to start to build their recommendations.

Next Meeting:
Tuesday, August 27, 2019 at 10:00 A.M.
Tampa Police Headquarters – 5th Floor
411 N. Franklin Street
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Minutes prepared by City Clerk Support Technician Karencia Ciagala