

# TOWN OF PALM BEACH

Information for Town Council Meeting on: November 13, 2019

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TO: Mayor and Town Council

VIA: Kirk W. Blouin, Town Manager

FROM: Joshua Martin, Director of Planning, Zoning & Building

RE: Town of Palm Beach: Project for Code Reform

DATE: November 6, 2019

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## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that Town Council consider the attached scope, approach, and path forward regarding Zoning Code Reform for the Town of Palm Beach.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Almost a year ago, I began working at the Town as the Director of our department. Recently, I pulled out my meeting notes from my first meeting with Kirk and Jay and read the following from that meeting: “the immediate focus of your leadership of the department should include improving the many processes of the department (way too many forms, outdated processes, streamlining and making processes more user-friendly), using a common sense approach, improving responsiveness of our staff members (24-hour response time), being more accessible to the public and our customers, reforming the customer service culture of the department’s employees, explore ways we can use technology to improve our processes and customer service, and make a point to reach out to the external customers on site in Town and in the public . . .”

Reflecting over the (almost) past year, I am proud to report that we (PZB) have made a significant amount of progress in the aforementioned initiatives. Through a combination of all of your hard work and Wayne coming on board in December as our new Assistant Director/Chief Building Official, we have managed to achieve the following (and there are many others):

- Reorganized the Planning, Zoning, and Building Department in an effort to implement a community-wide mandate and a vision approved by leadership that: promotes customer service to residents, property owners, business owners, and various contractors/consultants that is timely, consistent, respectful, clear, and accountable; and constructs a framework that empowers process owners and managers within the department to take actions that result in real and sustained improvements to the processes of the department;
- Identified and began adopting “quick fixes” for the Zoning Code with Staff, stakeholders, Planning and Zoning Commission, and Town Council including a general approach to comprehensive Zoning Code Reform;

- ARCOM and LPC staff reviews/approvals are now processed as PERMITS, which has eliminated storage of approved plans pending payment, eliminated unpaid staff approvals, eliminated lost plans, and greatly expedited the review process;
- Community outreach with residents, business owners, and professionals to see how department processes can be improved upon to provide better service and efficiencies; The A/C, roofing, and water heater affidavit program that allows licensed contractors to certify their installation as code compliant, eliminating final inspections by Town inspectors (although we can audit the installations for ensure compliance);
- Implemented a revision to the EDEN permitting software to allow the issuance of just ONE building permits for a project. This will significantly reduce staff and customer time in the application and permit issuance processes;
- Implemented “turn-around” permits for certain small construction and renovation projects, like water heater and A/C replacements;
- Conversion of all Public Work’s Right-of-Way permit types from the AS400 to EDEN;
- Creation of Staff Approval permit type to facilitate the collection of delinquent fees and allow electronic review/approval and timely digitization of ARCOM and LPC staff approvals;
- Oversee the processing of Special Event permits;
- PZB Digital Submission Task Force – vetted options for implementation of a digital plan review system;
- ERP Task Force identified Tyler EnerGov implementation as the best step forward for an online permitting system;
- Completed the ISO Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule;
- Contracted with engineers from KimleyHorn – one for structural, one for assistance to Public Works/Development Plan Review;
- Established Construction site monitoring program for all active construction projects in the Town;
- Created contractor self-certification affidavits;
- Issued window / energy code interpretation letter;
- Established the one permit per project (dropping from 76 permit types to 36);
- Drafted the clean-up of Chapter 18, Building and Administrative Amendments Ordinances which were adopted by Town Council;
- Introduced Annual Facility permits for commercial buildings;
- Monitored and improved overall building plan and development plan review timelines and started turn-around permits for the first time in the Town's history;
- Drafted updates to the Business Tax Rates that were ultimately adopted by Town Council;
- Drafted updates to the Master Fee Schedule that were ultimately adopted by Town Council;
- Created and implemented Certificate of Occupancy Checklist for all large projects,
- Implemented the certification process for final costs of building projects which in return captured lost (in the past) revenue to the Town;
- Drafted the first-ever Town Property Maintenance Code which was ultimately adopted by Town Council; and

- Drafted the first-ever construction screening ordinances for ARCOM and LPC which were ultimately adopted by Town Council.

But our department still has a great deal to do and many achievements lie ahead. As I outlined in a recent Staff Meeting, over the next year, I am confident we can achieve the following:

- a. **Adopt a proposed path forward for comprehensive Zoning Code Reform with Staff, stakeholders, Planning and Zoning Commission, and Town Council.** A successful outcome will include the following: identifying the type of code the Town should pursue as well as methodology of code; scoping of the zoning code reform; defining the area of the new/parallel code; identify the planning process for the code reform; determining the relationship with existing regulations; assessing existing conditions; visioning and creating regulations by engaging the community, explaining and illustrating the new regulations, create the regulating plan and zoning district regulations, and create a new development review process. *\*\*The attached approach and scope in partnership with the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) outlines the proposed path forward recommended by Staff to Town Council for consideration during the 14 August 2019 Town Council Development Review meeting.*
- b. **Continue to improve the day-to-day building permit and development plan review processes within the next six months.** A successful outcome will include the following: reducing the turnaround time for building permit issuance and development plan review; identify and execute “permits while you wait”, establish specific review days of the week: ARCOM, LPC, development plan review, and minor permits; and insert more professional judgment in the permitting/plan review process by our Staff. *\*\*This task in an ongoing project within the Department.*
- c. **By the end of the 2019, complete the Palm Beach Process Improvement Initiative to assist Planning, Zoning, and Building (PZB) customers, staff, and managers responsible for resident, business, and development review processes in identifying and implementing process improvements.** The primary purpose of this process will be to begin melding the processes into a seamless experience that is:
  - Supported by customer service that is timely, consistent, respectful, clear, and accountable; and
  - Conducted in partnership with the residents, business community, and private development sector with better tools and support to staff in performing their roles.

The aim of the project becomes to empower process owners and managers to take actions that result in real and sustained improvements to the aforementioned processes. It will focus on the facets of the process that process owners and managers within the PZB department are in control of and can actually change. The focus of what can be changed will be defined at the very beginning of the project so that valuable time will not be wasted on thing that cannot be changed. *\*\*To date, the PZB Department has conducted two public workshops on Process Improvement. The third workshop will be conducted in September 2019 and the last workshop will be conducted in the Fall (late November or December).*

The project will use a continuous improvement approach and lean methodology to facilitate the following outcomes:

- Clear understanding among all process owners of the end-to-end process (“as is”);
- Identification of bottlenecks and inefficiencies that create backlogs and inconsistent outcomes, resulting in both frustration for both customers and staff,
- Shared understanding and a clear vision among all process owners for an improved, streamlined process (“to be”) that addresses frustrations and inefficiencies; and
- Tangible changes that reduce the amount of time it takes the city to issue/process applications through the various PZB review processes and improve customer and staff satisfaction with the process and its outcomes.

The project will include, but not be limited to the following tasks:

- Mapping of the current and future state processes, identifying gap and process improvements, develop action plans, and work on five improvement projects for 90 days;
- Assess technology to determine how automation technology may be used to further streamline work flows and bring Palm Beach’s process in line with current industry standards and best practices that are tailored for Palm Beach’s unique environment;
- Conduct listening sessions with stakeholders (residents, business owners, Town Council members, civic organizations, PZB board and commission members, developers, design professionals, contractors/subcontractors, and others as needed) to hear frustrations with the process, identify what is working well, gather their ideas for improvements and share some of the Town’s emerging solutions for process improvements.

A successful outcome will include the following:

- Fully documented current and future state process maps, with a clear vision of what the process is to become and the value proposition for customers;
- Full understanding of the process across all divisions of the PZB department, including the problem areas and inefficiencies and what is needed to further automate the process to achieve more streamlining and greater efficiencies;
- Staff skills in business process mapping and applying lean practices to achieve process improvements;
- Clarity about how customers view the process, what they want from it, and the changes they would like the Town to make;
- Greater willingness to see changes positively, consider alternatives to current policies and procedures, and take action to change the process for the better;
- Measurable progress on all of the targeted process improvements;
- More collegial relationships and stronger collaboration among the divisions within PZB that carry out the various processes;
- Greater understanding of the departmental-level capacity to work on and sustain improvements; and
- Final product that “owned” by the various stakeholders that will participate in the initiative.

My expectations for the PZB Department remain to continue the path of positive change we are on via a client-focused mentality, professionalism, self-starter attitudes, and continued risk-taking in the name of responsibility and common sense.

CC: Jay Boodheshwar, Deputy Town Manager  
John C. Randolph, Town Attorney