

LAND DEVELOPMENT AD HOC COMMITTEE

September 23, 2002

The Land Development Ad Hoc Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on September 23, 2002 at 9:00 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Rex Griswold, Chairman
Kyle Jones
Claudia Walters

COUNCIL PRESENT

None

OFFICERS PRESENT

Paul Wenbert

1. Recap of Past Presentations.

Building Safety Director Crystal Pearl provided a synopsis of staff presentations to this Committee on August 5, 20 and 26, 2002.

2. Committee Recommendations.

A. City of Mesa Land Development Work Plan (Current/Ongoing Process Improvements):

Ms. Pearl referred to the current *CITY OF MESA LAND DEVELOPMENT WORK PLAN / Status Report on Current and Ongoing Process Improvements* dated September 19, 2002 (Work Plan) (see Attachment), which was provided to the Committeemembers, and discussed the status of numerous process improvements that pertain to the Building Safety Division.

Ms. Pearl responded to a series of questions from the Committeemembers and provided information relative to (8) Microfilm Digitizing and (9) Updated Microfilm Procedure, including the fact that records that are currently stored on microfilm will be digitized and stored on compact discs in the future; the fact that 9-Updated Microfilm Procedure is an interim procedure designed to better manage the microfilm process until digitizing is fully implemented; the fact that funding for digitizing (approximately \$50,000) was previously approved by the Council but is presently "on hold" due to budgetary constraints; the fact that the \$50,000 previously approved is insufficient to digitize all of the Building Safety Division's microfilm records; the fact that the audit team and digitizing representative recommend that the ongoing microfilming process be converted to digitizing as soon as possible; the fact that digitizing records is an integral step in the process of facilitating on-line public access to parcel information; the fact that the digitizing process is slightly more expensive than the microfilming process; the fact that microfilming is currently outsourced to a private vendor; and that with Council/management approval, staff

hopes to begin digitizing records within approximately one month to coincide with the third phase of automation.

Committeemember Walters voiced concerns regarding the fact that funds are currently being spent to microfilm records that must also be digitized in the future and voiced support for implementing the digitizing process as soon as possible to avoid the double expense associated with microfilming and subsequently digitizing records.

Chairman Griswold and Committeemember Jones concurred with Committeemember Walters' comments.

Deputy City Manager Paul Wenbert commented that most of the capital left in the budget has been placed "on hold," subject to departmental appeals and stated that management would consider releasing funds for this project in the near future.

Ms. Pearl responded to a series of questions from the Committeemembers and provided information relative to (18) Customer Service Survey, including the fact that the survey is being created and will be conducted with the assistance of the Quality and Organizational Development (Q & OD) Division and the Chamber of Commerce; the fact that the first survey is scheduled to begin in October; the fact that survey cards will be attached to building permits together with instructions to mail the completed surveys to the Mesa Chamber of Commerce; and that Q & OD staff will have access to the survey responses received, calculate the survey results and disseminate the results to the departments so that process improvements can be considered to address negative survey results.

In response to questions and concerns voiced by Committeemember Walters concerning (20) Section 301 Uniform Administrative Code Revision to Permit Policy and the fact that permits are required when replacing various appliances, Ms. Pearl reported that in response to Mayor Hawker's request to investigate the need to require permits for appliance replacement, staff surveyed MAG and other Valley cities. She reported that staff recommends changing the City's policy to conform with Phoenix's permit requirements regarding appliance replacement, which precludes the need for a permit when replacing "like for like" (same size and energy source). Ms. Pearl commented that the City has a cooperative relationship with the Home Depot and provides information with respect to appliance permitting requirements. She added that staff plans to disseminate this information to the public by other means as well, including use of the City's web site.

Committeemember Walters urged staff to advertise appliance permit requirements in the *Open Line*.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters concerning (23) Multiple Plan Submittal Pilot Program and the anticipated start date for the screening team, Ms. Pearl advised that subject to management approval of the new screening process, staff intends to have the screening team in place by Monday, September 30, 2002.

Chairman Griswold voiced approval concerning (25) Building Inspection Comments in the Field and commented that this new procedure implemented during August, which is designed to eliminate arbitrary/unnecessary field changes by inspectors, will help reduce complaints received from builders.

Planning Director Frank Mizner referred to the Work Plan and discussed the various process improvements pertaining to the Planning Division.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters concerning (5) Planning Infill Development Policy, Mr. Mizner reported that the Planning and Zoning Board and the Downtown Development Committee will be involved in the process of developing an infill policy, together with the Economic Development Office, the Neighborhood Services Office and the Planning Division.

Chairman Griswold discussed (13) Desert Uplands Update and the issue of revised street lighting standards for this area. He stated that, based on inquiries he has made concerning street lighting standards, a "no lights" standard is an option. He added that he resides in a community without street lights and prefers this type of environment.

Committeemember Walters stressed the importance of ensuring that residents are apprised of the fact that reversing a "no lights" standard after a community is built requires residents to bear the cost of installing street lights.

In response to questions from Committeemember Walters relative to (14) Citrus Sub-area Plan, and the possibility of a sub-area plan being developed for Lehi, Mr. Mizner advised that Lehi is identified in the General Plan as a special sub-area of the City, that there is significant interest from Lehi residents to develop a sub-area plan, and that there is no monetary requirement associated with conducting sub-area plans. He added that it is likely that Lehi will be the next area that staff will assist in developing a sub-area plan.

Assistant Fire Chief Bob Deleon addressed the Committee, referred to the Work Plan and discussed the various process improvements pertaining to the Fire Department.

Chairman Griswold voiced support for the new inspection procedure relative to (31) City of Mesa Fire Inspection Procedure, which establishes one key contact inspector for each project, and commended staff for their efforts in this regard.

Chairman Griswold also commented on (32) Fire Code Interpretations Sub Team and stressed the importance of ensuring that the City's Fire Codes address the end goal of safety without adding unnecessary expenses.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters concerning staff's intent with regard to updating Fire Codes that are vague and require interpretation, Chief Deleon stated that staff intends to conduct a Fire Code update process in the future that will solicit citizen input in addition to input from the Building Safety Division, with the goal of developing a Fire Code that is clear with respect to safety intent.

Chief Deleon provided an overview of this Committee's previous directives to staff relative to general and process improvement goals and also discussed the manner in which staff intends to achieve these goals, including: 1) being business friendly - providing solutions, not just answers; 2) providing customer service - seeking internal and external feedback to improve; 3) providing fair and equitable treatment - implementing appropriate training and continuing education to provide fair and equitable application of the Fire Code; 4) being consistent -

reengineering processes by documenting and reviewing all current processes and through benchmarking; and 5) striving to be the best City in the Southwest in which to conduct business.

Chairman Griswold urged staff to continue efforts to work with the business community and seek feedback with respect to processes and service. He voiced the opinion that a key element in being the best City in the Southwest to conduct business is having high standards and consistently applying those standards. He stated appreciation to staff for their efforts to achieve the goals of this Committee.

B. Guidance on Current Tactical/Strategic Plan (for Land Development Process Improvements):

Committeemember Walters requested that staff provide Work Plan progress updates to the full Council at Study Sessions on a quarterly basis. She stated approval regarding the Work Plan and said that she would also like to see a sub-plan developed for the Lehi area. She commented on the problem of telephone callers being transferred numerous times before talking to the appropriate staff member and getting answers to questions. She urged staff to develop a training component that addresses the need to provide answers to customers' questions in an efficient manner.

Committeemember Walters also commented on the Committee's recent observance of a pre-submittal meeting in the Planning Division, which is designed to assist developers with the submittal/approval process, and voiced the opinion that the information provided to first-time developers who are unfamiliar with the process appeared to be confusing. She suggested that staff consider using laymen's terms and implementing a "one-on-one" approach with these customers whenever possible. She also suggested that staff consider arranging a knowledgeable "secret shopper," possibly a staff member from another local community, to go through the development submittal process and objectively report on the process and customer service received.

In response to a question from Committeemember Jones relative to the improvement of turn-around times and the role the new automated system will have on turn-around times, Ms. Pearl reported that the Building Safety Division recently began advertising turn-around times and noted that builders need to know how long the approval process is expected to take in order to schedule work accordingly; that if a project requires a third submittal, a mandatory developer/staff meeting is scheduled; that staff members have been directed to routinely follow-up on unanswered review comments to help reduce the number of resubmittals; that staff is now rigidly adhering to turn-around times for specialized projects, including tenant improvements and other small projects (12 days or less); that 75% of resubmittals are currently being processed in 12 days or less; that an expert has been retained to help train staff on "plan checking," which is anticipated will improve turn-around times; and that the new software system will automatically track the progress of all projects and flag any delays.

In response to a question from Committeemember Jones concerning the new Rehab Code, Ms. Pearl reported that the current target completion time frame is the spring of 2003.

Committeemember Jones stressed the importance of recognizing the efforts of staff at all levels.

Discussion ensued regarding various methods used by the Planning, Building Safety and Fire Departments to acknowledge the efforts of staff.

Chairman Griswold stated support regarding staff's efforts to minimize the number of resubmittals. He stressed the importance of focusing on the underlying goals associated with the various process improvements and continually evaluating whether or not the various processes, rules and regulations are helping to achieve these goals or conversely building barriers to these goals. He also voiced appreciation to staff for their efforts to address system/process problems and specific customer problems and voiced the opinion that customer complaints will continue to decrease as the various processes are improved. He stated approval regarding Committeemember Walters' suggestion that the Council be updated on a quarterly basis concerning the various process improvements and also requested that staff update him by e-mail when a process improvement has been completed or a significant step has occurred.

C. Committee Future Action:

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that this is the last scheduled meeting of the Land Development Ad Hoc Committee.

Mr. Wenbert suggested, and there was Committee concurrence, that the updated Work Plan be submitted to the full Council for discussion and consideration at an upcoming Study Session.

Chairman Griswold voiced appreciation to staff for their ongoing efforts and for the open manner in which they responded to the goals and suggestions of the Committeemembers.

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Land Development Ad Hoc Committee meeting adjourned at 10:25 a.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Land Development Ad Hoc Committee of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 23rd day of September 2002. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK