



MEMORANDUM

TO: Councilmember Sally Clark, Chair, COBE
Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Councilmember Tim Burgess

FROM: Diane M. Sugimura

DATE: September 3, 2010

SUBJECT: Committee Briefing: DPD Monthly Report for September 8, 2010

Update on Permit and Revenue News

July proved to be one of the highest months in a very long time in terms of the value of building permit intake, over \$150 million. However, August was much less at closer to \$100 million – a more “normal” month for these times. So, July certainly was not an indication of a trend! Year to date through the end of August, the number of building permit applications and their value were 4,491 and \$1.044 billion respectively. Compared with 2009, this was about a 9% increase in the number of permits, but a 15% decrease in value.

Master Use Permits (MUPs), early indicators of what is to come, continue to decline. In 2007, we averaged 93 per month, dropping to 62 per month in 2008, then to 32 in 2009, and now 29 per month thus far in 2010.

As I noted last month, this makes DPD’s budget situation even more challenging than a decline in both permits and values – from a revenue perspective as well as a workload perspective. We have now given lay-off notices to more than 35 people, and have reduced the number of hours worked for a number of additional staff. This will be effective October 1. We are reaching very, very deep for these cuts. This will affect our service to our customers. All are working diligently to try to re-allocate our resources to provide the coverage we need as well as quality service. We are looking at the possibility of reducing our service hours at the counter, in order to provide full coverage when we are open, and are currently surveying our customers in terms of what would be best for them. This will likely require an ordinance to change our hours.



The good news ... at this time, we are meeting our initial review targets, and our 120-day targets for construction and MUP reviews. However, we anticipate we will not be able to continue to meet these targets.

These are very difficult times, not only for those who will be leaving, but for those who will be staying, without their colleagues, and with much work to do.

Activities in City Planning

Planning Work Plan: We are taking a new approach to developing our 2011-2012 work plan for the City Planning Division and will be reviewing this with both Mayor and the City Council in the coming months. Staff has been working with the Seattle Planning Commission and Council Central Staff to lay out the three-year work plan (2010 - 2012) to aid us in setting clear work priorities, track performance over time and still allow enough flexibility to respond to “emerging issues.” We hope this approach will help us manage staff resources and meet expectations. We briefed COBE on this in June and plan to get back either to COBE or for a full Council briefing in September.

Central Waterfront: “Reshaping Seattle’s Central Waterfront” – DPD, SDOT and Parks have joined with the Seattle Parks Foundation to host a major public event at Benaroya Hall (7:00 - 10:00 pm, 200 University Street). The four shortlisted design teams will discuss their skills, experience and approach to the project. They will not present design proposals. We will solicit questions and comments from the public. We are also calling for questions from the public in advance of the program, and will host a blog discussion on what we heard/what we learned following the event. The selection committee will be judging the shortlisted firms on the quality of their presentation and their ability to engage the public at this event. A final decision will be made soon after this event.

Roosevelt: We recently met with Jim O’Halloran and Diane Haddock to discuss a strategy for moving forward with the Roosevelt Neighborhood Association’s (RNA) rezone proposals. We are tentatively planning on a September meeting with their Land Use Committee, then a larger public meeting later in the fall. We also talked about the process for moving forward in light of the rezone request from Roosevelt Development Group, which geographically overlaps with some of the RNA proposed changes.

Neighborhood Plan Updates 2010: The Neighborhood Advisory Committees (NACs) for both Rainier Beach and Broadview/Bitter Lake/Haller Lake have been established; orientation sessions have been scheduled for September 15 and 22, respectively. They will begin by working with staff to identify shared work plans for each plan update. Also, positions on both Committees were left open (reserved) to widen the range of interests represented on the NAC: four positions for B/BL/HL and two positions for Rainier Beach are reserved for youth, people of color, low income renters and persons living with disability. The final configuration of each NAC will include 15 seated members and 5 alternates.

Street Food Initiative: SDOT plans to publish a SEPA determination on the street food legislation next week. There is a 21 day comment period before the legislation can be completed in preparation for transmission to Council. Media interest in the initiative remains very high.

Vacant Retail Activation Initiative: The “Storefronts Seattle” project launched on September 2 – for Chinatown/International District and Pioneer Square. The project comes out of the City’s partnership with the Pioneer Square community in the Pioneer Square 2015 Revitalization Plan.

Landscaping for Transfer Stations and Other Utilities: The SEPA appeal period expired; no appeals. We are now preparing the blue file for transmittal. Council requested this piece of legislation.

Multifamily Pilot – Energy Disclosure Ordinance: When the legislation was being debated in late 2009, we met with representatives of the multifamily housing community who agreed to support the ordinance if we conducted a pilot project to work through reporting issues for MF properties prior to the April 2012 initial reporting deadline. We are doing that ... met with representatives of Washington Multi-Family Housing Association, Rental Housing Association, Puget Sound Energy and Seattle City Light. For the pilot we will be looking for a broad sampling of different sizes, ownership (rented vs. owner occupied), utility providers, etc. Attendees at the meeting will forward this list to their constituents and then submit proposed projects, from which we will develop a final list of 10 to 20 projects to participate. We intend to run the actual pilot for about six months – January to June 2011 – which should give us valuable information to refine our business processes and training materials before we reach out to the 8,000+ buildings that will begin benchmarking in 2012.

There are numerous policy issues that must still be addressed for the MF market; this group agreed to serve as a technical advisory group for input. The biggest looming issue is around confidentiality of utility billing information, especially for condos. We are also talking with utilities in California to see how they addressed these issues, since they have been developing the California benchmarking program for several years.

Open House on Trees - Proposed Tree Regulations and Citywide Tree Programs: This has been scheduled for September 21, from 5:30 - 7:30 pm, with presentation at 6:00 pm, in Bertha Knight Landes Room of City Hall. Staff from the Office of Sustainability and Environment, Transportation, Parks, City Light, Seattle Public Utilities and Department of Planning and Development will be in attendance.