



MEMORANDUM

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

**FROM:** Diane M. Sugimura

**DATE:** June 3, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Committee Briefing, June 8, 2011: DPD Monthly Report

**Permitting Activity**

Construction Intake Appointment Times: Last week we began implementation of the enhanced intake appointment calendar. While our posted appointment times are now down to 6 weeks from the earlier 8 to 9 weeks, on June 1 we added 25 appointments starting the week of June 6. We now have approximately 80 appointments available a week, compared with 46 a few weeks ago. Staff has been calling folks who had previously received intake appointments scheduled in early July and are offering them these earlier appointments. Some have accepted; some have declined indicating that they will not have their application submittal materials prepared in time for the earlier appointments.

As I mentioned previously, we do a careful balancing act among intake appointments, meeting our initial review times, and staff resource availability. Increasing intake appointments without increasing review time or other permit processing related services has a negative impact on our overall performance. We have been monitoring our revenue closely; we cannot yet ask for contingent budget authority nor are we in a financial position that will allow us to significantly increase our staffing. However, in an effort to keep our overall performance near target we have authorized limited overtime, and have brought back a former employee on a temporary basis.

Construction Permit Applications: Through May, intake volume for construction permits was 3,003 compared with 2,514 in 2010, an increase of close to 20 percent. However, the intake value continues to lag. This year's total is \$564 million compared with \$705 million this time last year, a decrease of 20 percent. It should, however, also be noted that the



intake value of the past two months, was higher than the first three months of the year. We are also aware of several fairly large projects that are anticipated to come in later this year, so there are some more hopeful indications.

Issued permits also provide a more positive sign. The number and value of issued permits is trending upward. About 12 percent more permits have been issued (2,756 in 2011), for a value of \$1.05 billion, compared with 2,457 permits valued at only \$608 million last year, an increase in value of 75 percent. Overall, we take this to be a good sign for the construction industry.

Construction Permit Initial Review Timelines: For projects that have a 48 hour initial review target we exceeded our goal, completing 95% of our reviews within 48 hours. For projects with a 2 week initial review, target we did not meet our goal as we only completed our review of 56% of the projects within that timeframe. However, by three weeks we had 97% of those projects reviewed. For our most complex targets which have an 8 week initial review target we exceeded our goal by completing 84% of our reviews within the targeted time period. We only had one Priority Green project in May and we met our goal of getting it reviewed in 6 rather than 8 weeks.

Master Use Permit Activity: While January and February were extremely slow in terms of Master Use Permit applications (average 23 per month), things are looking up. March, April and May averaged more than 35 a month with May, at 38, equal to the highest month in the past three years. We've also heard from applicants saying that they will be in with more new projects. More than 82 percent were completed within the 120-day target.

## **Update on Code Compliance Activities**

Rental Housing Licensing and Inspections: Consistent with Resolution 31221, DPD has been working with a Stakeholder Group since December. Last week we held the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. In the first several meetings, informational materials and topics identified in the resolution (e.g., scope, frequency, and standards for an inspection program; cost of licensing and/or inspections; who inspects) were generally discussed by the group as a whole. In more recent meetings, topics often were first considered in small groups, with report backs to the entire Stakeholder Group. This allowed for more in-depth discussions on specific topics, allowing opportunity for more voices to be heard. We've posted meeting agendas, background materials and data, and meeting summaries on the web site at <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Compliance/RentalHousing/Overview/default.asp> so others could keep informed about the group's activities. Members of the public were provided an opportunity to speak at each of the meetings; several people followed the discussion very closely, attending nearly all of the Stakeholder Group sessions.

We are now in the process of analyzing the stakeholder input and developing recommendations. The last meeting will be to gather stakeholder feedback about the

draft report and recommendations. We plan to report back with recommendations for Council consideration this summer.

Response to Vegetation Overgrowth Complaints: As indicated during budget discussions, code enforcement staff reductions have resulted in a change in how DPD responds to complaints about vegetation and overgrowth. We are asking complainants to provide specific addresses or locations of properties with potential violations. We no longer accept complaints about large areas without specific addresses (e.g. “the 2800 through 3100 blocks of NW 58<sup>th</sup> St.”), because that requires staff to spend a significant amount of time inspecting and finding property addresses along stretches of streets where only some of the properties have violations. In most instances our response to an overgrowth complaint is to mail information to the property occupants about the complaint and inform them of code requirements for trimming vegetation growing on private property. We will, however, inspect when a complainant describes a potentially hazardous condition such as vegetation that forces pedestrians to walk in the street, or that obscures traffic signs or drivers’ sight lines at intersections.

In 2011 thus far, we have received 242 complaints about vegetation overgrowth. For the majority of the overgrowth complaints (179), where no potential hazard was described, information was mailed and no additional follow up action was taken. An inspection was performed in response to 46 complaints (about 20%). When we do inspect, if a hazard is observed we follow up with enforcement action until the violation is cured, usually starting with a warning, and then by issuing a citation. The first citation carries a penalty of \$150 and subsequent citations carry a penalty of \$500. If no hazard is observed we mail the information about the complaint and code requirements to the property occupant or to the taxpayer. A few complaints (7) were either withdrawn, transferred to another agency or closed as a duplicate complaint; 10 more are currently in process.

These changes have successfully reduced the caseload of the Housing and Zoning Inspectors; however, as we approach the busy season for weeds and vegetation complaints, we will monitor public reaction to our new enforcement practices, and keep the Mayor and Council informed. We will also work closely with Fire, as in the past, if overgrown yards become a fire hazard once the days start becoming warmer and drier.

## **Planning Work Plan**

Neighborhood Planning: In Phase 1 of our work in Rainier Beach, we have learned about the richness of community assets. It is proud of its cultural and economic diversity; it has wonderful parks and a community center about to be rebuilt, a library, four schools and in its center, a light rail station. It has community based organizations and businesses supporting the neighborhood. However, it is missing linkages – between people and communities, between places. We are proposing that people identify how they think the community can further support healthy people/families, a stronger community, and a good physical environment.

In Broadview/Bitter Lake/Haller Lake, we learned that this is a very stable neighborhood with a beautiful natural setting, and that it is convenient to shopping and for transportation. We also heard that people feel like it is missing its heart. Similarly, it does not have a clear identity. And not surprisingly, we also heard a desire for more sidewalks – especially a sidewalk network that connects key destinations.

We are now in the midst of Phase 2 – with large community meetings planned for both neighborhoods. The POL's (planning outreach liaisons) will start their Phase 2 work in mid-June. We are scheduled to complete our work in the first quarter of 2012 – in time to inform the budget process – to follow up with implementation.

Broadview/Bitter Lake/Haller Lake

Second Neighborhood Planning Workshop (confirming priorities)  
Tuesday, June 21, 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
Bitter Lake Community Center at 13035 Linden Ave

Rainier Beach

Second Neighborhood Planning Workshop (confirming priorities)  
Tuesday, June 28, 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
South Shore K-8 School at 4800 S. Henderson ST

Shorelines: The comment period on the proposed update to the City's Shoreline Master Program ended on May 31, 2011. We received many comments particularly from the North Seattle industrial community, the Port of Seattle, the liveaboard community, and the environmental community, to name a few. We are compiling the comments and are responding to each one. Staff have spent many hours meeting with organizations to understand their concerns and to explain the proposal, or to work out changes that may address their concerns. Once we make revisions to the proposal, we will share with the public all comments received and our responses. We will also then initiate another review period, anticipated to be approximately six weeks, to allow interested people and groups to respond to our revisions. We anticipate the Mayor will forward his proposal for a new Shoreline Master Program to Council by the end of 2011.

Northgate: DPD is in the process of selecting an urban design consultant to assist with planning around the Northgate light rail station. This work is funded by the Regional Sustainable Communities grant from HUD, which is administered locally by the Puget Sound Regional Council.