



**City of Seattle**  
Office of Economic Development

**Memorandum**

**Date:** September 18, 2012

**To:** Councilmember Sally Clark  
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen  
Councilmember Richard Conlin  
Councilmember Jean Godden

**CC:** David Yeaworth, Legislative Assistant to Councilmember Sally Clark

**From:** Steve Johnson, Office of Economic Development  
Roque Deherrera, Office of Economic Development

**Re:** Citywide Business Advocacy Team Update

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**Background**

A team of business advocates representing different City departments has existed, in one form or another, since 2003. Key individuals from each major regulatory agency were assigned to assist OED in resolving case-by-case business issues. However, due to misaligned expectations and competing job responsibilities, this group quickly gave way to an informal list of service-oriented individuals in each department who had strong working relationships with OED.

The informal model had many successes in helping individual businesses. However, a lack of consistency among team members, conflicting department priorities, and an inability to recognize systemic issues required a new approach to coordinated business advocacy.

In 2010, Mayor McGinn called for formalization of the Citywide Business Advocacy Team (CBAT) as part of his *Seattle Jobs Plan*:

- Citywide Business Advocacy Team: *The City is forming a Business Advocacy Team of key staff from multiple City departments to help Seattle businesses navigate government. The advocacy team will help identify and correct systematic permitting and regulatory issues impacting Seattle businesses and develop solutions that cut across departments.*

Also in 2010, the City Council passed a Statement of Legislative Intent supporting the establishment of a Citywide Business Advocacy Team:

- SLI 24-1-A-1 OED: *The Council requests that the Citywide Business Advocacy Team be an on-going established interdepartmental team. The emphasis of the Citywide Business Advocacy Team would be on small and medium businesses, but would include*

*the provision of business assistance and case management for large businesses when needed. The Council requests that the Office of Economic Development (OED) be the conveners of the Advocacy Team and that key personnel be designated to participate on the Advocacy Team from OED, Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle City Light, the Seattle Fire Department, Department of Planning and Development, and Finance and Administrative Services.*

*The mission of the team would be to provide business assistance and case management for businesses that need assistance in working through specific issues related to one or more city departments, to identify systemic and/or recurring issues, barriers for business clusters, and regulatory challenges, to provide input to departments on opportunities for continuous process improvements, to recommend to the Council and the Executive policy modifications and process improvements, and to respond to direction provided by the Council and Executive.*

*OED is requested to provide an annual briefing to committee on issues and challenges identified and recommendations for policy modifications and process improvements that improve the City's responsiveness to businesses and improve the organization of the City's services.*

### **CBAT Activity**

From January 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012, the CBAT assisted 96 businesses with issues that varied greatly by industry sector, type of request, department involved, and path to resolution. During the 2011 calendar year, 71 business issues were addressed by CBAT. In 2012, 51 business issues are projected to be addressed.

Of the 96 total business issues from January 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012, 78% were successfully closed, 10% were unable to close, and 11% percent remain open. The majority of business issues involved DPD (30%) and SDOT (24%), with SPU (11%), OED (9%), SCL (6%), and FAS (6%) making up almost 1/3 of all referrals.

### **Next Steps: Finalize CBAT Recommendations**

The final report, including specific policy and regulatory recommendations based on CBAT experience, will be submitted to City Council on October 1, 2012. The policy and regulatory recommendations will align with the following themes:

- Transparency regarding department policies and interpretations;
- System improvements resulting in quicker permitting;
- Increased support of business districts;
- Reducing the impacts of public construction projects on businesses; and
- Expanding opportunities for small businesses in Seattle.

Attachment:   CBAT Memorandum of Agreement

**INTERDEPARTMENTAL AGREEMENT  
REGARDING  
CITYWIDE BUSINESS ADVOCACY TEAM  
(March 2011)**

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This interdepartmental agreement is intended to explain the purpose and intent of the Citywide Business Advocacy Team and to detail the individual and department responsibilities for team participants. Active team participation is required by the Mayor from the Office of Economic Development (OED), Finance and Administrative Services (FAS), Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), Department of Planning and Development (DPD), Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), Seattle City Light (SCL), Seattle Fire Department (SFD), and Seattle Police Department (SPD).

**PART A. BACKGROUND**

The Citywide Business Advocacy Team has existed, in one form or another, since 2003. Initially, point people from each major regulatory department were assigned to assist OED in resolving case-by-case business issues. However, due to misaligned expectations and competing job responsibilities, this group quickly gave way to an informal list of service-oriented individuals in each department who had a pre-existing working relationship with OED.

The informal model had many successes in helping individual businesses. However, a lack of consistency among team members, conflicting department missions, and an inability to recognize systemic issues required a new approach to citywide business advocacy.

In August of 2010, Mayor McGinn called for formalization of the Citywide Business Advocacy Team as part of his Seattle Jobs Plan:

***Citywide Business Advocacy Team.** The City is forming a Business Advocacy Team of key staff from multiple City departments to help Seattle businesses navigate government. The advocacy team will help identify and correct systematic permitting and regulatory issues impacting Seattle businesses and develop solutions that cut across departments.*

Also in 2010, the City Council passed a Statement of Legislative Intent supporting the establishment of a Citywide Business Advocacy Team, and requiring OED to formalize the team and identify key recommendations for policy modifications and process improvements to enhance the City's responsiveness to businesses.

**PART B. CITYWIDE BUSINESS ADVOCACY TEAM MISSION**

The Citywide Business Advocacy Team will provide the highest level of customer service to all Seattle businesses in support of job creation, economic diversity, and racial equity. We will work proactively and in partnership with businesses to resolve their issues in a manner that protects the public health, safety, and welfare of the city; and in a manner that meets the needs of the businesses we serve. We will track issues, identify systemic problems, and recommend regulatory and policy changes to the Mayor and City Council based on our experiences.

## **PART C. REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### 1. The Office of Economic Development will:

- a. Fund and manage Executive Pulse, a web-based business case management tool used by OED and its contracted business retention and expansion partners and the Citywide Business Advocacy Team;
- b. Provide Executive Pulse training to Citywide Business Advocacy Team members;
- c. Organize and convene monthly Citywide Business Advocacy Team meetings to discuss current cases and to identify needed regulatory and policy changes;
- d. Provide project management capacity to support successful operations of the Citywide Business Advocacy Team;
- e. Prepare an annual written report to the Mayor and Council, with input from Citywide Business Advocacy Team members. The report will include a summary of business issues addressed by the Citywide Business Advocacy Team and recommendations for regulatory and policy changes; and
- f. Prior to preparing its annual report, meet with city agency directors, superintendents, and chiefs to discuss proposed policy and regulatory changes that would directly or indirectly impact their agency.

### 2. City agency directors, superintendents, and chiefs will:

- a. Assign a member of their staff with appropriate experience and customer service capabilities to serve as a member of the Citywide Business Advocacy Team;
- b. Educate their staff on the importance of the Citywide Business Advocacy Team, and empower their designated team member the ability to discuss business issues directly with managers, supervisors, and staff, as appropriate, with the full authority of the agency director, superintendent, or chiefs; and
- c. Meet with their Citywide Business Advocacy Team member on a regular basis to review the status or result of business issues and to discuss potential regulatory and policy changes.

### 3. Citywide Business Advocacy Team members will:

- a. Provide excellent customer service to all businesses, regardless of race or socioeconomic status, including but not limited to timely communication, proactive problem solving, and business advocacy within their agency;
- b. Act as the single point of contact on Citywide Business Advocacy Team issues, taking full responsibility for resolution of the issue;
- c. Work within the team to identify systemic business issues that may require regulatory or policy changes;

- d. Communicate with team members of involved agencies prior to elevating Citywide Business Team issues to the director, council or mayoral level;
- e. Will utilize Executive Pulse as the unified business case management tool;
- f. Participate fully in monthly Citywide Business Advocacy Team meetings;
- g. Alert OED and their directors, superintendents, or chiefs immediately if the time required to perform their primary job duties and participate fully on the Citywide Business Advocacy Team becomes unmanageable;
- h. Attend at least one City Business Casual event per year as a group; and
- i. Participate in briefings to the Mayor and City Council regarding their work on the Citywide Business Advocacy Team.

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**PART D. EXPIRATION OF MOA**

This memorandum of agreement will not expire unless it is terminated by the Mayor.

**PART E. AGREEMENT**

THE undersigned hereby agree that the Office of Economic Development (OED), Finance and Administrative Services (FAS), Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), Department of Planning and Development (DPD), Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), Seattle City Light (SCL), Seattle Fire Department (SFD), and Seattle Police Department (SPD) will fully participate on and support the formation and operation of the Citywide Business Advocacy Team as described above.

*Signatures are on file*

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen H. Johnson, Director  
Office of Economic Development

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Fred Podesta, Director  
Finance and Administrative Services

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Peter Hahn, Director  
Seattle Department of Transportation

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Diane M. Sugimura, Director  
Department of Planning and Development

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Ray Hoffman, Director  
Seattle Public Utilities

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Jorge Carrasco, Superintendent  
Seattle City Light

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Gregory Dean, Fire Chief  
Seattle Fire Department

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
John Diaz, Chief of Police  
Seattle Police Department