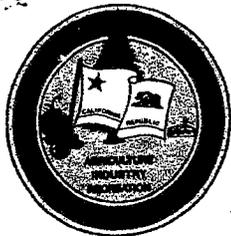


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AUG 25 2010



COUNTY OF SONOMA
PERMIT AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

2550 Ventura Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95403-2829
(707) 565-1900 FAX (707) 565-1103

August 23, 2010

The Honorable Gary Nadler, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of Sonoma County
600 Administration Drive, Room 106J
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Honorable Judge Nadler:

The following is my response to the recommendations in the 2009-2010 Grand Jury report that pertain to the Permit and Resource Management Department.

Report Title: **Permits and Resource Management Department Redux**
Recommendation R-1 (page 26): *PRMD should take a more active role in leading applicants through the complexities of the permit process. For example, initial screening could be provided to determine whether or not a specific application calls for a pre-application meeting. If a preapplication meeting is called for, it could be required. The fee structure for such a screening and pre-application meeting could be adjusted to the size and complexity of the project and should be revenue neutral with respect to the current fee structure.*

This recommendation requires more analysis although some elements are already in process. The department agrees with the overall direction of this recommendation. Options to be analyzed include but are not limited to:

- Developing improved process "guides" and informational materials for permit applicants
- Reducing staff rotation at front counter stations to improve consistency and continuity of advice to applicants
- Process and regulatory streamlining to reduce complexity
- Screening criteria to encourage better use of PRMD's existing pre-application process
- Update PRMD's Residential Construction Manual with emphasis on assisting non-professionals through the process

Analysis of these options will include costs and anticipated benefits and discussion with stakeholder groups to ensure that the most effective measures are identified. The department will present a report to the Board of Supervisors on process and regulatory streamlining no later than October 2010. Analysis of other options will be completed by February 2011.

APPROVED
READ AND CONSIDERED

DATE 8/25/10 BY MW

The Honorable Gary Nadler, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of Sonoma County
August 23, 2010
Page Two

Recommendation R-2 (Page 26): More emphasis is needed on avoiding unreasonable delays. Monitoring of application progress should be used to detect and resolve any bottlenecks. If a delay is due to the workload or abilities of the staff assigned to the task, then steps should be taken to provide additional assistance for completing the application review in a timely fashion. The entire Division should take responsibility for adhering to the turn-around time policy, as appropriate for each case.

This recommendation has been implemented. The department already monitors key processing time indicators as part of its Performance Measurement project so that permit processing turn-around times can be managed to the extent possible with available staff. For example, in the Plan Check section, turn-around times are compared to Board-adopted standards for specific types of building permit applications. When processing times fell behind these goals in July, the director authorized Saturday overtime for plan check staff, which provided staff with uninterrupted time to catch up and get processing times back within standards. In the Project Review Division, the two Supervising Planners meet regularly with each staff planner to review progress on pending cases. The supervisors provide direction on prioritization and resolution of issues that may be delaying the processing of the application. Applications and turn-around times in the other divisions of PRMD are monitored in a similar fashion.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Parkinson', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Pete Parkinson, AICP
Director

cc: Board of Supervisors
Court Executive Officer
County Administrator
County Clerk