

MEETING OF THE PERMIT EFFICIENCY TASK FORCE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 2005 7:00 P.M.
BELMONT CITY HALL, 3RD FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
1 TWIN PINES LANE
(FORMERLY, 1070 SIXTH AVENUE)

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Task Force Chair Bill Dickenson at 7:00 p.m.

1. ROLL CALL

Phil Mathewson, Bill Dickenson, Jacki Horton, Steve Simpson, Jerry Steinberg, Colette Sylver, Ken Hall, and Will Markle. (Absent: Dave Warden, Brian Korn) Staff present: Director Craig Ewing, Building Official Mark Nolfi, and Principal Planner Carlos de Melo.

2. AGENDA AMENDMENTS

No amendments.

3. CONSENT CALENDAR

Simpson / Sylver to approve minutes of 5/11/05 - unanimous.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Review Example of Project Review – Garage Addition

Director Ewing presented the results of the balloting over the ‘brainstormed’ ideas from the last meeting. The ballot was presented with three options for determining priorities: Top 12, top 6 and top 3 priorities. Some ballots were adjusted because they included thirteen votes for the ‘top 12’ list. In discussing the ballots, the Task Force noted:

- There were a number of items that appeared to overlap and may have created some difficulty to making choices
- “Design guidelines” was the highest priority at all times
- “Establish a tiered review process” was moved to second-highest priority for the ‘top 6’ and ‘top 3’ lists.
- Design Guidelines and Process Handbook are both priorities and could be combined
- Graphic depictions in the guidebooks and hand-outs are key.
- City should simplify the process – either send only most complex projects to Commission or simplify level of analysis and review

b. Determine Task Force Priorities

Director Ewing suggested the Task Force consider how it will select recommendations for its report to the City Council, using the following criteria:

- Consensus – Suggestions that have the widest support within the Task Force

- Effectiveness – Suggestions that will likely bring about the greatest success
- Achievable – Suggestions that pose political, fiscal, administrative difficulties

The Task Force reviewed all the ideas from the brainstorm session and identified the following as meeting the first criterion:

Consensus

- Design guidelines w/ graphics
- Process handbook
- Simple zoning information handouts
- “Check-to-shovel” timelines
- Shorter review timeframes
- Accurate estimate of permit fees
- Additional planning staff
- Appointments with senior planning staff
- Require architect/engineer for sloping lots
- Clear criteria for submittals
- Performance measures for planning
- Pre-application meetings
- Appointments w/ all department reps
- Defer geo-tech reports to plan check
- Final signoff 90 days after landscaping installed
- Keep process – simplify analysis, reduce timelines
- Optional expedite fee
- Surcharge for excessive re-submittals
- Zoning / building seminars
- Flex hours at Permit Center

The Task Force then reviewed the remaining “non-consensus” items to identify those that were likely to have a positive effect on saving time or money for either the applicant or the City. Following discussion by the Task Force, the remaining ideas were categorized, as follows:

Effective in Saving Time or Money

- Allow more over-the-counter staff approvals
- Staff approval of final landscape plan
- Allow reduced plan sets for Planning Commission
- Bond to guarantee landscape installation
- Establish tiered review process

Not Effective in Saving Time or Money

- Deposits / cost accounting (vs. flat fee)
- Neutral “coach” / ombudsman

The Task Force agreed to drop the last two items from further consideration.

Lastly, the Task Force discussed the five effective, non-consensus ideas and what administrative, fiscal or political problems (‘achievability’) they raise. Specific attention was given to the problems of creating a ‘tiered’ review process, including loss of community control and lack of adequate design guidance to staff / applicants. The fiscal impacts of adding planning staff were also discussed. The Task Force also considered:

- The current backlog of planning applications
- The times that recent applications required from “completeness” to a public hearing
- The single family design review process as it began 1999 and subsequently evolved, and
- The process for amending the current regulations

c. Finalize Task Force Recommendations

Director Ewing proposed to recast the recommendations based on the discussion at this meeting – including additional ideas and comments - and return them to the Task Force for review and comment prior to the next meeting. The next meeting will be dedicated to finalize the recommendations in preparation for a draft report for the City Council.

5. NEXT MEETING

The Task Force agreed that its next meeting would be Wednesday, July 6th at 7 p.m. in the 3rd Floor Conference Room in City Hall.

6. COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments)

Jack Crist, Interim City Manager, observed that there seemed to be a clear consensus among many different parties of the need to add staff to the Planning Department.

Bob Ledoux, Finance Commission Chair, reported that the Finance Commission met on June 2nd to discuss staffing levels in the Planning Department, at the request of the City Council. He noted that the Finance Commission was interested in the work of the Task Force, and he has a new appreciation for the complexity of the work being undertaken by the Task Force and valued everyone's time and effort.

7. ADJOURNMENT

9:00 p.m.

DRAFT