

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Roger L. Stancil, Town Manager

SUBJECT: Development Review Assessment Update

DATE: January 25, 2010

PURPOSE

This memorandum provides an update to our [June 8, 2009](#) report on improving the development review process.

To complete the changes that can be implemented by the staff, I am requesting that Council enact the attached budget ordinance for the development review technology project.

To continue this effort, I recommend that the Council initiate a review of the Land Use Management Ordinance, the Council's development-related policies and procedures and the role of the advisory boards. If you concur with that recommendation, the first step will be to report back to council with our findings and recommendations as outlined in this memorandum. The Council could then set priorities based on that review. Adoption of the attached resolution would authorize this review and funding for the use of a planning consultant to assist in the review.

BACKGROUND

Since 2008, staff has reviewed and improved the planning and development process consistent with the Council's goals and community input. Three primary staff efforts were to:

- 1) Halt incomplete applications early, allowing complete applications to move through the process more efficiently.
- 2) Differentiate application types so those that require fewer reviewers or that meet adopted guidelines are handled more efficiently.
- 3) Develop a technology solution to assist in tracking application review and approval.

Staff also continues to find ways to provide better information to the public. For example, the website has a new [Current Development Activity Map](#), produced by the Information Technology Division, to provide data about projects in the current development pipeline.

DISCUSSION

At the [June 2009](#) update, the Council authorized the Town Manager to implement the changes to the development review process that were within his authority. These two efforts will complete the first phase of improvements.

Manager Actions

1. **Benchmarking the Internal Development Review Improvements:** We are implementing improvements to the development review process and we have identified measures by which we will evaluate our success. Please refer to Attachment 1 for a detailed discussion of what we have achieved with the internal development review improvements.
2. **Seek a Technology Solution for Development Review:** A [Request for Proposals](#) for an electronic development review system has been released with the assistance of Jake Jacobson of RHJ Associates. The RFP describes the project objectives, the Town's technology environment, and information on the current review processes and participants.

After analyzing and evaluating the proposals, interviews and site visits, the project team will forward a recommendation to the Town Manager in spring 2010. A budget ordinance (Attachment 2) is attached to establish a capital project budget for this effort. The budget ordinance appropriates \$300,000 from Carolina North Fees to establish a project budget for the purchase and implementation of a development review system. The fees will be collected this fiscal year and reside in fund balance until the Council appropriates them.

Proposed Council Activities

A second phase of improvements would require Council approval. We suggest the following process for the Council's consideration:

1. **Review the Land Use Management Ordinance:** We recommend a thorough review of the Land Use Management Ordinance as related to the [Council 2009 goal](#) to continue improvement of the development review process. This review would identify which parts of the LUMO are working, where there are conflicts between the LUMO and other goals, and where changes in other regulations or conditions impact the LUMO.
2. **Review Roles of Advisory Boards and Commissions:** We recommend a review of the policies and procedures of the Boards and Commissions and an analysis of their role in the development review process.
3. **Review the Council's Development-Related Policies and Procedures:** We recommend that the Council review the role of its policies and procedures in the development review process.

4. **Provide a Report to the Council of Recommended Improvements:** We would return to Council in June with a list of recommendations for review. The Council could then choose and prioritize items for further action.

We think the best way to undertake this task would be to use a planning consultant. The attached resolution would authorize \$15,000 from the funds designated for planning consultants for the technical assistance necessary to perform this review and to assist with interviews of officials, staff and developers. This can be done without affecting any other Council planning priorities.

SUMMARY

The staff will continue to implement those actions that the Manager is completing and that are discussed in this memorandum. We are now asking that the Council consider authorizing the next steps proposed above to continue our progress.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council adopt the attached budget ordinances for development review technology, and adopt the attached resolution for a review of development standards and procedures including authorization of up to \$15,000 for technical assistance for the review.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Status Report on Benchmarking Internal Development Review Improvements (p. 7).