

Response to Recommendations

Citizen Review Committee: Planning & Building

October 2, 2014

		Anticipated Completion Date	
	CRC Recommendation	Division Response/Action Taken	
1.	<p>Upgrade the building permit & zoning software & computer equipment utilized by the Division to maximize efficiency and enhance service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, the Division is using 20-year-old software to handle building permits. • Current available technology streamlines the permitting process and allows easy collaboration with those seeking the building permit. • Support recommendation of Division Director to upgrade software for building permits (and the associated hardware). • Consider extending software platform to zoning issues. • Require accountability with annual reporting from Division to City Council/Mayor to verify improvements over the next several years with close attention to time periods for permit approval. 	<p>In the Division's FY2015 budget request, funding was approved for an upgrade to the Building Department's software. Along with permitting, the Division identified 6 other core features that any software package must include: web-based citizen access to the permitting system, ability for mobile inspections, functionality for use across the Division including building inspections, code enforcement, project/process management and tracking, and ability for electronic plan review.</p> <p>A software review team from the Division has been actively reviewing software companies that provide these services. A contract is expected to be signed before the end of the year. Implementation averages between 9-12 months.</p>	<p>January 2015 to sign contract.</p> <p>January 2016 for full implementation</p>
2.	<p>Provide mobile devices for employees who are in the field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Today, Division employees who inspect for 	<p>In the Division's FY2015 budget request, funding was approved for mobile devices for building inspectors. If enough savings are realized within the</p>	<p>2015</p>

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	<p>building permits or code enforcement must return to the City offices to complete the necessary paperwork.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly recommend providing mobile devices to all such Division employees to allow work while in the field. 	<p>budget, mobile devices will also be provided for code enforcement, otherwise, funding will be requested in the next budget cycle.</p> <p>The Division will not purchase the mobile devices, however, until the contract with a new software provider is signed as there are certain providers that recommend different types of mobile devices.</p>	
3.	<p>Have the Division compile Marketing Documents demonstrating the cost benefits of locating to Idaho Falls on an annual basis for the Mayor, City Council, those involved in local economic development, the local media and the general public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Committee was struck by the lack of data available showing the cost of living in Idaho Falls or locating a business in Idaho Falls compared to surrounding communities. We believe such comparisons are critical for the Mayor and City Council to determine future policies concerning taxes, spending, etc. Also, such are critical tools for economic development. We recommend compilation of the following reports each year: 	<p>The Division has compiled the recommended data and is finalizing a draft report to send to the Mayor's office for review. There are two main challenges with creating the reports. First, as noted by the committee, not all of the data is readily available. Comparison of fees requires cooperation with the other jurisdictions if we are going to continue to offer comparisons of actual buildings or projects. Second, for the cost of living or cost of doing business reports, not all monthly consumption data is available unless a homeowner or business owner is willing to provide it. In the end, the reports will be produced and will be as accurate as possible, but users of the report will need to be aware of any assumptions made within the report to understand the limitations of the comparisons.</p> <p>The Division will work towards establishing a system</p>	Annually

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4.	<p>Given the relative competitiveness of the current building and zoning fees charges by the City of Idaho Falls, we support the Division Director's modest recommendations to increase such fees.</p>	<p>As noted, the 10% increase in fees was approved in the FY2015 budget cycle. The Division will continue to monitor fees in comparison with other communities, and make sure that revenues reflect reasonable operational costs.</p>	Ongoing
5.	<p>The Division provides a great number of services free to the public for which small user fees should be charged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Division currently provides a great number of services for free to the public. • We recommend imposition of modest user fees for services so that the requester bears the cost, not the taxpayers of Idaho Falls 	<p>As part of the FY2016 budget process, the Division will identify services provided for little or no cost. Fees which reflect the cost of the services will be developed and submitted to the Mayor and City Council for consideration.</p>	August 2015

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6.	<p>Create a culture of training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many employees requested ongoing training.• If the request for new Division software is implemented, then training for Division employees will be critical.• We also believe in the value of workshops and conferences to learn best practices being used in other communities. Given that building practices constantly change and continued innovation with respect to planning & zoning approaches, such are essential.• Strongly recommend that the Division be provided sufficient funds to handle training and provide for continual opportunities to attend and participate in relevant workshops and conferences.	<p>The Division will identify those training opportunities that are most beneficial to the staff and make budget requests for travel and training accordingly.</p> <p>As noted, the new software will require training. The contract will include initial software training. Most providers also hold annual user conferences which a staff member should attend. It should be noted here, that administration of any new software package will require assistance from the City's IT Department and training will be required for those staff members as well.</p> <p>Because the costs of travel, including flights, hotels, and meals, are generally the most expensive portions of training, the Division will watch for opportunities within Idaho and the region for training, as well as web-based training opportunities that require only the cost of registration. The Division will also look for partnerships with other City divisions who provide relevant training. There are training opportunities offered by national organizations that are still extremely valuable and should be attended by staff. The Division will continue to request funding for these opportunities as well as appropriate.</p>	

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7.	<p>Use technology and interns/externs rather than staff over the near term to expand capacity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City of Idaho Falls is growing and such will continue to create pressure to add additional permanent staffing to the Division. • We believe that the combination of new software and mobile devices will offset much of the need. • For any gaps, we recommend, in the near term, creating a vigorous internship/externship program with regional colleges and universities. Also, such a program will create an ideal method of identifying future employee candidates in the event of vacancies. 	<p>The Division has been evaluating and identifying projects for interns and seasonal employees. The first internship position was recently posted. Staff will continue to look for partnerships with area colleges and universities to help refine the internship program.</p> <p>Funding for a paid internship program was approved in the FY2015 budget to begin an internship program. The Division will monitor the use of these funds to determine the appropriate amount needed.</p> <p>For building inspectors, the Division has relied on fill-in inspectors rather than replace any of the 3 recently retired inspectors. With current and anticipated workloads, there may be a need to hire a fourth inspector.</p> <p>For other gaps in necessary staffing, staff will look for efficiencies to be gained through use of new technologies, seasonal and other temporary help, and other options which do not commit the Division to long-term salary and benefits for work that could be accomplished with these other options.</p>	<p>-Ongoing -First internship position posted in October 2014</p>
8.	<p>Consider getting out of day care regulation in that the State of Idaho is also doing enforcement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2008, the City of Idaho Falls passed its 	<p>This is a policy decision for the Mayor and City Council. Staff will work to supply necessary information and data as any discussion on this matter</p>	<p>As requested by Mayor and Council</p>

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	<p>day care ordinance which requires two inspections a year for the 77 licensed facilities in the City.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2011, the State of Idaho required licensing for day care facilities • Currently, the Division is only able to visit facilities approximately once per year because of staffing. • City Council should reconsider whether the City of Idaho Falls should regulate this industry or to rely on the State of Idaho. 	<p>moves forward.</p>	
9.	<p>Consider Reduce the number of boards and committees staffed by the Division.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disproportionate staff time is being consumed by various boards and committees rather than performing core missions of planning, building permits and zoning. • The Division currently staffs the following entities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planning Commission ○ Board of Adjustment ○ Redevelopment Agency ○ Historic Preservation Commission ○ ADA Commission 	<p>As noted by the committee, some of the boards and commissions staffed by the Division are either necessary or perhaps required by law. Others are boards which may be required by code but meet only on very rare occasions. Some of the other boards listed are boards on which Planning or Building Department staff members are ex-officio or even voting members. The level of staffing and commitment varies widely. The Division will evaluate the work and goals of the various committees staffed as well as required staffing. Recommendations for changes will be submitted to the Mayor and City Council for consideration.</p>	<p>Submit evaluation report by end of 2015</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Beautification Commission○ Idaho Falls Business Assistance Corporation○ City Council○ Idaho Falls Shade Tree Committee○ Idaho Falls Downtown Development Corporation○ Affordable Housing Task Force○ GIS Development Group○ BMPO Bike/Ped Committee○ BMPO Technical Advisory Committee● It is estimated that 21-27% of the total hours by 6 staff members of the Division are consumed in servicing the various boards and committees.● While some are critical, the City Council should carefully consider the impact in the future of having the Division staff boards and commissions and the potential impact on their other duties and responsibilities.		