

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY BOARD AGENDA LETTER



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
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TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Valentin Alexeeff, Director

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SUBJECT: **Process Improvement for Ministerial Permitting**

Recommendations:

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive a progress report on the Planning and Development process improvement effort;
2. Authorize the Chair to execute a general services contract with a consultant team led by the firm of Crawford, Multari & Clark (not a local firm) to proceed with a comprehensive update of the Zoning Ordinances for the period of December 2, 2003 to June 30, 2005 and in an amount, including a 10% contingency, not to exceed \$176,616; and,
3. Direct staff to continue to implement short and mid-term goals and to return as appropriate with a fourth status report for an update on progress achieved and specific recommendations in three months.

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendations are primarily aligned with: Goal No. 1. An Efficient Government Able to Respond Effectively to the Needs of the Community; Goal No. 4: A Community that is Economically Vital and Sustainable; and Goal No. 5: A High Quality of Life for All Residents.

Discussion:

In response to Board, community, applicant, and staff concerns, the Planning & Development Department began a significant process improvement effort in February, 2003, by forming an in-house team charged with analyzing the ministerial permit process and developing needed

improvements. The key recommendations from that effort were taken to and accepted by the Board on July 22. The Board authorized the initiation of a second phase, to include community members, and addressing large substantive improvements. This second phase started by inviting a broad spectrum of community members to participate; over 150 initially volunteered (and more so have since then). The kick-off meeting for phase 2, chaired by Chairwoman Schwartz and Vice Chairman Centeno was held August 25, 2003. The four steering groups created to direct the phase 2 effort made their first status report to the Board on September 23, 2003. This report is the second such progress report.

We have undertaken the process improvement team (PIT) effort due to a broad understanding that the ministerial permit process has not been working effectively to serve the needs of the County or the community. Continuing to operate with the current system, which many experience as complex, costly, and confusing, does not allow for the best possible development to be achieved in our jurisdiction. We understand the best development to be that which meets the needs of the applicant while adding value to the community as a whole, and respecting those aspects of the natural and social environment that our community has deemed important. We hope to preserve these ideals while developing a streamlined, coherent process that is accessible to both staff and the community, without the uncertainty and high costs associated with the existing system.

With these guiding thoughts in mind, we have spent the past months analyzing the current system to understand the true nature of the problems experienced by both staff and the community. We have expanded our original PIT efforts to include the wider community through the formation of the Steering Groups. These Groups have studied the original ideas formed in PIT, built upon them, and are now developing concrete recommendations for implementation of improvements. Some of the work of the Steering Groups has led to concrete recommendations that will be presented at the December 2 hearing; other Steering Group efforts are more long-term and complex, and will present only a status update. (Other, more straightforward, improvements are already being implemented, as discussed later in this report.)

We are approaching our task with the understanding that we are working in a dynamic situation; near-term improvements that we continue to develop and implement have already made positive changes in our ministerial process, while long-term improvements will be ready for implementation at various times. We understand that our improvements must work together as a cohesive package, taking into account the successes already made, so as not to create unnecessary overlap and duplication of effort in our recommendations. We are working to achieve this goal through regular meetings of the original PIT team members who are distributed throughout the four Steering Groups, and through coordination of the two facilitators. Although we are experiencing the beginning of positive change as a result of the short term improvements, we realize that this is not enough to achieve the desired results expected by the Board, community, and staff. We cannot stop at this point, but must use our early successes to build momentum. We must follow through on our commitment to improve the ministerial permit process for all involved.

Groups that have worked most effectively to date have identified the frustrations of the various members upfront, and decided how to address them early in the process. Moving past individual frustrations has allowed Steering Groups to move forward with their chartered work of improving the ministerial process in a collaborative atmosphere. Meaningful work is best accomplished when a higher level approach is taken to the problems being addressed, instead of continuing to attack certain stakeholders and certain ideas. Steering Group members have shown their commitment to getting past affixing blame and criticizing current conditions, by moving to recommending solutions.

For example, a team comprising staff and community members has been assembled to work on the Tree Protection policy paper as part of an ongoing short-term project. Members of the group reached an early understanding that the current guidelines are too restrictive and do not achieve the goal of preserving natural resources, while making it difficult to develop sites. Although this is a highly controversial subject, members of the group have aired their frustrations upfront, and have worked towards positive solutions without personal attacks. They are now working collaboratively to balance the needs of the property owner with mandates for environmental protection.

Our investigations have yielded an understanding that the current problems with the ministerial process arise from the complex interactions of many factors, both internal and external. Therefore, we are coming to your Board with a systematic approach, with many improvements integrated to work together. This report provides a summary of ongoing process improvement efforts that have occurred during the last two plus months. Because the current situation arises out of a complex interaction of many elements, the PIT I team is continuing to stay involved, to ensure that the efforts of the four steering groups are coordinated and self-reinforcing. The department and involved community members have moved forward with meetings held by each of the four Steering Groups, conducted a search for a consultant for the revision and update of the Zoning Ordinance, and continued to move forward with the implementation of short-term improvements.

Steering Groups:

As presented at your Board's meeting of September 23, 2003, three steering groups composed of county staff and members of the community, and the one group composed of P&D staff, human resources staff, and staff from the planning departments of several cities in the county have been formed.

Each steering group was tasked to develop improvements for that aspect of the ministerial process that is their main focus. The following are the main focus areas for each steering group:

Steering Group #1 Nature of the Interaction – to improve the interaction between applicants and P&D to make the process more collaborative and ensure it better serves the interests of both the applicant and our community; using the

time and resources being invested more effectively in order to achieve higher quality development.

Steering Group #2 Permit Process - to upgrade case intake, assignment, management, and completion in order to ensure the process proceeds more smoothly and quickly, with more predictable outcomes.

Steering Group #3 Policies and Zoning Ordinances – to upgrade the structure and content of the General Plan policies and zoning ordinances, to eliminate unintended inconsistencies and make the ordinances more user friendly, to improve and clarify policies and interpretations in key areas (such as grading, height calculation, etc.), and to eliminate key roadblocks.

Steering Group #4 Training, Tools, Supervision and Management - to enhance staffing, supervision, training, and tools, and to examine the roles of internal review bodies.

Steering Group Progress:

The four steering groups have been very careful as to what issues and challenges they addressed first. All groups felt it was important to build trust, confidence, and credibility by first tackling challenges on which rapid progress could be achieved. They consciously left more challenging issues for later rounds.

Each group will provide at the Board's December 2, 2003 meeting a status report of its activities and, as appropriate, recommendations for improvements.

Steering Group #1—The Nature of the Interaction:

The group created four distinct subcommittees, with their own goals. Specifically:

User identification

Goals:

- Identify the categories of stakeholders on both sides of the counter and their unique needs and perspectives.
- Identify how the information that is communicated at the counter can best be provided (and when) in the applicants' development process.
- Develop recommendations to improve the exchange of information and the nature of the interaction at the information counter.

Public awareness

Goals:

- Create a public outreach and education campaign that will help users navigate the system and help the staff to guide them.
- Provide real-time training programs for applicants and agents.
- Invite agents, homeowners associations, members of the environmental community, and others to provide training programs to staff.

Web Page Development

Goals:

- Provide information not currently available to applicants unless they come to one of the Building & Safety counters.
- Simplify access to information.
- Create a user-friendly home page with documents, the answers to frequently asked questions, tools that help applicants know what their options are and how best to proceed, and best estimates of what applicants can expect in time, costs, and outcomes.

Continuous Improvement

Goals:

- Provide a clear and accessible path for staff and the public to make suggestions for process improvement and to have procedural improvements implemented quickly and efficiently.
- Develop and reinforce a culture of continuous improvement.

Each of the subcommittees has held meetings, conducted research, and prepared recommendations on their individual topics. Each subcommittee has brought its findings back to the group as a whole for discussion and adoption by the entire steering group. Steering Group One's goals as well as the detailed recommendations are included as an attachment to this board letter.

Steering Group #2—The Permit Process:

An overall goal of Steering Group #2 is to increase the number of ministerial permit applications for which the review and approval process is truly ministerial, minimizing the amount of required discretion unless the applicant specifically chooses to propose a project for which discretion (and therefore more time and higher costs will be required). The group members believe the following recommendations to be steps in that direction, but that much more needs to be done.

The Group created five sub-groups: Design/BAR Process; Interdepartmental Coordination; Agricultural Issues; Permit Application/Submittal Requirements; and Process Flow. Each subgroup has its own focus and goals, and each has developed recommendations that have now been adopted by the entire Steering Group. Specifically:

- ***Design/Board of Architectural Review Process***

- ◆ At application intake, initiate review of each proposed project by assigning a planner to complete a preliminary plan checklist, which will provide information on the project and any deficiencies/requirements (e.g., zoning inconsistencies, receipt of homeowner association recommendations, etc.). This action will also a) provide feedback to applicant, b) help ensure consistency in interpretation of information throughout the planning process (e.g., in the case a planner is reassigned) and c) provide information on the project to the BAR in their deliberative process.
- ◆ Notice all projects going before the BAR to ensure the earliest possible notification to the public. This action may help to minimize neighbors' and community concerns about design-related issues, allowing for changes to be made earlier in the process. Also, for any design issue addressed at the Planning Commission, it is recommended that the Planning Commission return the project with their design-related comments for BAR for their follow-through.
- ◆ For projects where community/homeowner's association pre-approvals are recommended (e.g., Hope Ranch, Hollister Ranch, etc.) put the HOA guidelines and CC&R requirements on a linked web site and ensure that BAR has access to the guidelines during its review process.

- ***Interdepartmental Coordination***

- ◆ Expand the access to, and the capabilities of, P&D's computerized permit tracking and management system ("Accela") to allow staff from different departments (e.g., Fire, Environmental Health, etc.) and agencies (e.g., Montecito Fire) to add their conditions, comments, and fee calculations, to the dispositions of submitted projects that require their departmental clearance before permit issuance.
- ◆ Update the County website for public access to include: permit applications, submittal requirements for projects, projected timelines for projects, permit fees, school fees information, project status-check online program, and the names of designated contacts (and supervisors) in each department.
- ◆ Coordinate with service departments (e.g., water, sewer) regarding their determinations for proposed projects for adequate services (e.g., can-and-will-serve letters or availability letters).
- ◆ Create coordination and document turnaround expectations so that target decision dates can be set for each application and accountability.

- ◆ Assign experienced staff to work a common public information counter (Zoning, Building and Safety, Environmental Health, etc.). A schedule needs to be established and posted on the web site for the assigned staff from other departments to be available to the public at the counter.
- ◆ Designate a staff member (e.g., staff supervisor), experienced in their department and position, that the public can contact and meet with to complete a positive intervention when a project shows early signs of problems.
- ***Agricultural Issues***
 - ◆ Goal 1: Ensure that agricultural projects (e.g., discing and/or leveling of ground, crop rotation or conversion, irrigation systems, development of storm drains and diversions, berms, catchment basins and debris structures, implementation of erosion control and soil conservation projects, construction of hay barns, shade structures, etc.) are processed through the County in the most efficient and timely manner possible through coordinated planning by the County, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Cachuma Resource Conservation District (CRCDD).
 - ◆ Goal 2: Create a partnership between County, NRCS and CRCDD to develop accepted management practices based on scientific standards (e.g., hillside erosion control) to guide discretion in the permit process.
 - ◆ Actions/Next Steps in support of both goals
 - PIT shall initiate discussion with NRCS to 1) assess functions 2) identify redundancies and 3) streamline and coordinate process.
 - PIT shall initiate discussions with CRCDD to assess opportunities for coordinated oversight of agricultural lands and/or assistance to agricultural operators.
- ***Permit Application/Submittal Requirements***
 - ◆ Coordinate with Steering Group #3 in order to make appropriate improvements to the zoning ordinances so that fewer projects require referral to the policies in order to make the determination that the project conforms to the General Plan.
 - ◆ Create three ministerial permit “categories” with application submittal requirements commensurate with the permit level.
 - Level 1—Counter Permits**—Approved over the counter
 - Board of Architectural Review (BAR) not required;
 - Outside of: critical root zones, environmentally sensitive habitats, creek setbacks;
 - Not on a vacant parcel;
 - Does not require a Special Study

Level 2— Quick Turnaround Permits—Target: Decision within 1 to 60 days

Requires Board of Architectural Review (BAR);
Located in Coastal Zone (Note: if noticing information is provided by applicant, this could be a Level 1)

Level 3— Administrative Permits—Target: Decision within 61 to 90 days

Structures that are within: a critical root zones, environmentally sensitive habitats, or creek setbacks;
On a vacant parcel;
Requires a Special Study

- ◆ Speed up Notice to Property Owner (NTPO) form completion by: improving the availability of NTPO prototypes during intake; committing the needed resources to complete the NTPOs at time of intake; and conditioning projects for return of NTPOs prior to issuance.
 - ◆ Develop application submittal requirements and application forms on-line;
 - ◆ Adopt “Zero-Tolerance” for incomplete application submittal attempts. P&D will not accept any applications unless all of the required materials are provided upon submittal. In order for this to work successfully, we must first educate staff and applicants on what this means and remove any barriers to its implementation;
 - ◆ Assign experienced planners (Planner III) to the Zoning counter and create opportunity for advancement for planners who work the front counter;
 - ◆ Allow applicants to complete noticing requirements. (We are currently researching the current practice of noticing all Land Use Permits and Coastal Development Permits and will return with further information and possible recommendations regarding this current practice.);
- ***Process Flow***
 - ◆ Ensure complete applications by rethinking requirements by type of application, providing that information as early as possible to prospective applicants, encouraging pre-application meetings and consults, etc. Nothing slows down the review process and creates delays and frustration as much as having to stop the review while work that could have been accomplished as part of the original application is undertaken.
 - ◆ Similar to the manner in which the partners of law firms, accounting firms, and other professions meet with clients initially and regularly throughout the course of each case, involve senior staff (Planner IIIs and Supervising Planners) early and often with clients in the application submittal, review, and approval process.

- ◆ Structure the flow of application review and completion so as to decrease the total elapsed time and the planner hours (and therefore costs) required.
- ◆ Increase accountability by establishing standard hours, costs, and elapsed times for review and approval of standard permits. Communicate and commit to these standards with applicants.

Steering Group #3—Policies and Zoning Ordinances:

The group has decided to first focus on two major areas: 1) the structure of the ordinances and related documents, and 2) six substantive issues—grading/slopes, house size/height, creek setbacks, tree protection, protecting visual resources, and the importance of design. Among other activities, the group has participated in the selection of the Zoning Ordinance Update consultant, initiated a detailed analysis of ministerial permits approved over the past two years, and begun work on updated grading criteria.

Recommendations:

- Continue working to create a truly ministerial process for simple projects. The goal is to achieve a process for small scale projects that are allowed by right in their zone district, that does not require the discretion introduced by design review and other actions.
- Set criteria that are below the base zone district requirements. Eligible projects would be small in scale, below the maximum height, FAR, and setbacks of the zone district, and design elements such as screening and a single story would be required. (The project would also have to comply with the environmental criteria described below.) This way, simple projects that do not raise environmental or policy concerns would receive land use approvals without delay.
- In order to develop criteria for this permit path, an intern is collecting information on all of the ministerial permits approved by P&D over the past two years. For each permit, the length of processing time, amount of grading, height of structures, number of stories, distance from property lines, s.f. of structural development, parcel size, and other factors are being recorded for statistical analysis.
- Use this information to determine baseline criteria for a project to be eligible for the new permit paths, and the number of projects that may be eligible.
- The creation of environmental criteria for key issue areas.
- Develop criteria for various issue areas, such as grading, slopes, trees, creeks, geologic hazards, ESH, etc. These issues frequently arise in the course of ministerial permitting, as they must be found consistent with the applicable policies of the comprehensive and community plan. Our criteria would be consistent with comprehensive and community plan policies.
- The applicant could choose to design their project to be consistent with these criteria to receive an automatic finding of policy consistency for each issue area. This will provide certainty of outcomes for the applicant, and focus planner review on the issue areas that are not developed within the criteria.

- Applicants could choose to design their project outside of the criteria, although this would lead them to a policy analysis, as the planner would have to determine if the project is consistent with policy and may require items such as an arborist report, biologist report, or a redesign.
- This will address the vague nature of the comprehensive plan polices, such as grading shall be minimized to the “maximum extent feasible,” by providing a minimum criteria, below which projects are automatically consistent with the policy. Codify the adopted staff policy that overexcavation and recompaction of less than 36 inches and within the footprint of proposed structures on slopes $\leq 5\%$ is not counted against the allowable grading quantities. Our flagship criterion is grading, on which we are currently working.

Steering Group #4—Training, Tools, Supervision, and Management:

The group has decided to focus initially on three key areas: 1) the role of supervising planners; 2) staff retention and morale; and 3) jumpstarting and improving P&D’s training program. The group is currently:

- Working with Human Resources to review the existing role of supervisors, including the current job description, in order to improve consistency, promotions, candidate recruitment and retention.
- Reviewing staff surveys and available exit interview information in order to identify the true causes of (and potential remedies for) high rates of employee attrition.
- Implementing the new staff training program and developing specific orientation tasks in order to ensure “onboarding” of staff during the first few days/weeks/months of employment.
- Developing “Train the Trainer” sessions in order to improve the quality of staff trainings. These sessions will be scheduled by January of next year.
- Sending regular email updates to staff re: training opportunities and information.
- Benchmarking our tools and techniques against those used in other jurisdictions in order to identify new tools, techniques and technologies that may assist P&D staff and others. The group is researching jurisdictions statewide and is working directly with Jan Hubbell from the City of Santa Barbara and Marc Bierdzinski from the City of Santa Maria.
- Next steps include finalizing the revised orientation plan for new employees, completing scheduled “Train the Trainer” sessions, including follow-up staff trainings, continued benchmarking against other jurisdictions, and developing specific recommendations for improvements to the department.

Zoning Ordinance Update

The structure of our current zoning ordinances has evolved piecemeal over the years in a manner that is not consistent or user friendly. The current zoning structure and County ordinances have numerous problems, chief among them are the following:

- The zoning provisions are scattered among several ordinances organized by geography (i.e., inland, coastal, and Montecito) and by topic (e.g., signs, grading, and hillside development).
- There are inconsistencies among the ordinances in provisions for such issues as floor-area measurements, height measurements, trees, as well as in definitions.
- County staff has made numerous interpretations of the ordinances over the years, but the interpretations have not been codified, or even systematically recorded.
- The collective ordinances and related documents are too voluminous (over 3,000 pages).
- Information relevant to a proposed project is typically scattered throughout a number of documents, without cross-references or other aides to the applicant, reviewer, or other interested parties.
- Ordinance language and definitions lack the precision necessary to ensure consistent interpretation.
- Ministerial permits can require many months for issuance.
- Vague development standards can lead to inconsistent interpretation.
- Community plan development standards can act as zoning ordinance regulations yet are neither included nor referenced in the zoning ordinances.

As phase one of our improvement efforts, we recommended overhauling the three Zoning Ordinances to add clarity, eliminate ambiguity, and increase their usefulness as guiding documents by including illustrations, in order to create an internally comprehensive Ordinance. This effort would preserve the distinct values of the various areas of our community, as expressed in the Community Plans.

In order to accomplish this task, P&D sent out the Board-approved Request for Proposals seeking a qualified consultant team to prepare a comprehensive update of the Zoning Ordinances. Three proposals were received, from:

- The team of Crawford, Multari & Clark, Jacobson & Wack, and RBF Consulting, (based in San Luis Obispo);
- Greene/Zimmer Associates (based in Santa Barbara); and
- Dyett & Bhatia, in association with Cotton Bridges Associates, Kim Schizas, and Tom Jacobson (based in San Francisco).

Staff together with community members from Steering Group 3 reviewed the proposals, ranking them on a series of criteria. All three firms were then interviewed. Although not a local vendor, the team led by Crawford, Multari & Clark was the strong consensus choice. The reviewers and panelists found their team to be highly qualified and capable of working seamlessly with us to successfully complete our zoning ordinance restructuring. Their proposal, presentation, and interview demonstrated the expertise, capabilities, and commitment of their team, including, among other strengths:

- A strong background of having successfully completed extensive zoning ordinance restructurings, updates, and revisions for other California jurisdictions;
- A thorough understanding of our needs and requests;

- The ability to develop creative and effective solutions to the structural and content challenges posed by our current ordinances;
- The commitment of firm principals and other key personnel to undertake and complete the needed improvements in a high-quality manner;
- Geographic accessibility for scheduled and unanticipated meetings and presentations; and
- A well-thought-out work plan that will be able to complete the restructuring within approximately 12 months;

The cost proposals of the three firms were opened only after the proposals were reviewed, the firms interviewed, and the consensus recommendations reached. The proposal of the team led by Crawford, Multari & Clark was approximately \$100,000 less than that of either of the other two firms. At \$160,560 plus a 10% contingency, for a total of \$176,616, the projected costs are at the high end of the expected range, and are within the resources available and committed by the Department to this work in the current year.

Under a schedule already developed in discussions with Paul Crawford and his team, work would begin immediately and be completed in December, 2004 (outside of Coastal Commission process, training, etc.). Major goals of the effort will be to:

- Consolidate the existing zoning ordinances in a new, integrated, and inclusive zoning framework.
- Reduce the bulk and repetitiveness of the existing ordinances.
- Create a simplified set of zoning districts.
- Codify, as appropriate, staff interpretations of existing ordinances.
- Streamline and simplify the development review process, while maintaining and even improving the quality of the outcomes.
- Provide discretion and certainty where appropriate.
- Increase the consistency of outcomes.
- Reduce the time and costs of permit review and approval.
- Ensure applicants entering the process understand what is expected.
- Ensure consistency with the land uses, standards, and policies of the General Plan and Community Plans.
- Ensure compliance with recent State and Federal laws.
- Eliminate obsolete provisions.
- Eliminate inconsistencies among existing ordinances.
- Create a logical and accessible ordinance (in both hard copy and electronic formats) that is easy to use for the public and county staff.
- Consolidate, standardize, and update definitions.
- Illustrate definitions and standards.
- As a result of these other improvements, enhance the quality of that development that is approved.

Included in the contract is a series of meetings at scheduled points throughout the development process with Steering Group #3, joint sessions of the Planning Commission and Montecito

Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors. The consultant will also attend public hearings held by both the Planning Commission/Montecito Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors for consideration of adoption of the revised Zoning Ordinance.

Staff is currently assembling a team of community members, P&D staff, and a representative of the County Counsel's Office to serve as the project team and to oversee the consultant's efforts.

Selected Improvements Already Implemented:

Some of our improvements do not require additional resources, ordinance changes, or extensive analysis, but will provide benefits to applicants, the County, and staff, and can be implemented in the short term. We are beginning to implement these improvements while the Steering Groups are forming to tackle the mid- and long-range improvements. The following is a list of improvements currently in progress in addition to those implemented previously and reported in the prior progress report:

- ❖ Planners now conduct review meetings with supervising planners on ministerial permits shortly after assignment, to better ensure consistency between the planners, focus the planner's efforts on the key points and issues, and enhance the consistent application of policy and direction.
- ❖ Rita Bright has now returned as a half-time Planning Process Analyst; Lynn Rodriguez jumpstarted the P&D training program while Rita was on maternity leave. The PPA position, among other tasks, will provide a regular schedule of classes, including training on high priority topics such as case/workload management, personal productivity skills, and policy/ordinance interpretation, in order to provide staff with the necessary tools to process cases more consistently and efficiently. A series of supervision training sessions is also underway.
- ❖ We have begun to update our website with existing documents, including the complete Zoning Ordinance, brochures, and application forms, and will work to make this information complete and user friendly. This effort will help manage applicant expectations through available information, improve the quality of applications submitted, and address the public's desire for readily obtainable information via the internet. Subsequent steps will include allowing applicants to access the status of the permit on-line and, if the County as a whole adopts some parallel changes, allowing applicants to pay their fees on-line.
- ❖ We are continuing the process of installing a public computer for each intake counter, allowing the public to access programs such as Photomapper, the County Care system, and the Departments' web sites.

- ❖ Counter planners now ask key questions of persons initially requesting applications in order to better assess their request, permit requirements, improve communication, and to foster better public relations.
- ❖ We are working on a new intake submittal checklist that will be the basis for a complete submittal. We are evaluating the necessity of certain information, and are working to make the checklist clear, thorough, and available to applicants and agents before they submit so that they know exactly what information will be required at the time of intake.
- ❖ A mentoring program has been designed, pairing newer planners with experienced planners, in order to increase consistency, provide newer planners with additional training, and provide assistance to the experienced planners. Planners have started to work within this new mentoring relationship.
- ❖ Planners have been directed to document in writing the decisions and recommendations of planner consult meetings. This information will be provided to all participants to ensure that all have a common understanding and that commitments aren't lost.
- ❖ We are fostering an attitude of cultural change. By this we mean trying to move easy projects through effortlessly, and trying to meet with applicants on difficult projects with the goal of working collaboratively towards a project that achieves their goals and still meets our requirements.
- ❖ We are working on clarifying the definition of BAR exemptions.
- ❖ A focus group, including staff and community members, is also in the process of reviewing the existing tree protection policy paper. This document is being revised with assistance from interested parties from the community, and will be clarified to more accurately be represented as an interpretive guideline for existing tree protection policies, not a change in the policies.
- ❖ We are currently working to upgrade Accela (internal permit tracking system) to make the program more user friendly so that inputting and retrieving data on our cases is less time intensive, and more intuitive.

Next Steps

Each Steering Group will take the Board's direction at the December 2 meeting to determine its subsequent courses of action. The Groups already have started exploring the issues they wish to tackle next. They are also exploring how to involve additional community members in focus group efforts.

Given the intense work that has been undertaken over the past five months by the members of the steering groups, some members may choose to drop off. Each such person deserves sincere thanks for their willingness to invest the

Mandates and Service Levels:

This effort is not mandated. Service levels are expected to increase as a result of implementation of PIT recommendations.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

To date, the primary costs of the effort have been staff time and energy. (We should also not forget the considerable donated time of the community members). The costs of the facilitation consultant and staff were funded by FY 2002-03 departmental savings that were retained by the Department and rebudgeted in the FY 03-04 adopted budget. The consultant contract for the ordinance update is budgeted in the Development Review South division in the Permitting and Compliance Program, on page D-288 of the County's Adopted FY 03-04 Budget.

Exhibits: Proposed Contract with Crawford Multari & Clark
 Detailed Recommendations from Steering Group #1