



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Planning & Development  
Department No.: 053  
For Agenda Of: 1/26/2010  
Placement: Set Hearing  
Estimate Time: 45 Minutes on 2/2/10  
Continued Item: NO  
If Yes, date from:  
Vote Required: Majority

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Department Director(s) Glenn Russell (805.568.2085)  
Contact Info: Dianne Black, Director of Development Services (568.2086)  
**SUBJECT: Process Improvement Update**

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**County Counsel Concurrence:**

As to form: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence:**

As to form: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A

**Other Concurrence: N/A**

As to form: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

**Recommended Action(s):**

- A. That the Board of Supervisors set a hearing for February 2, 2010.
- B. On February 2, 2010, that the Board of Supervisors:
  - 1. Receive a status report on the Planning and Development Department's Process Improvement efforts; and
  - 2. Endorse the recommended work plan and provide direction to staff as appropriate.

**Summary:**

Since the inception of the County's Process Improvement effort in 2003, staff has provided the Board with periodic updates on the progress and focus of this effort. This report strives to provide the historical background, accomplishments to date and a summary of the Oversight Committee's role in improving the development review process in the County. The proposed Process Improvement Work Plan is also presented and discussed.

**Background:**

**Early Process Improvement Team (PIT) Efforts 2003 - 2005**

**Phase I – February 2003** - In response to Board, community, applicant, and staff concerns, the Planning and Development Department began a significant process improvement effort in February 2003 by forming an in-house team to analyze the ministerial permit process. The team focused on

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ministerial permits as they encompass by far the greatest volume of permits the department processes (approximately 6,600 permits per year at the time) and has the highest number of homeowner applications. The goals of this effort were to analyze the ministerial permit process and identify ways to improve outcomes while processing projects in a more timely and cost effective manner.

**Phase II – July 2003** - The key recommendations from the initial staff effort were taken to and accepted by the Board of Supervisors on July 22, 2003. The Board of Supervisors authorized initiation of a second phase, which included community members, to begin addressing substantive improvements. A broad range of community members were invited to participate in a kick-off meeting, hosted by Chairwoman Schwartz and Vice-Chairman Centeno, held August 25, 2003 in Buellton. Over 150 individuals initially volunteered including architects and landscape architects, land use agents, attorneys, homeowner's association members, and other community group members. Four steering groups were created to direct the effort:

**Steering Group 1 - Nature of the Interaction:** This steering group focused on improving the interaction between applicants and P&D staff to make the process more collaborative and ensure it better serves the interests of the applicant and the community.

**Steering Group 2 - Permit Process:** This steering group focused on the process itself, including case intake, assignment, management, and completion in order to ensure the process proceeds more smoothly and quickly, with more predictable outcomes and well-designed projects.

**Steering Group 3 - Policies and Ordinances:** This steering group focused on clarifying five policy areas, including tree protection, grading, creek setbacks, big house criteria and height definition, as well as guiding the restructuring of the County's five zoning ordinances.

**Steering Group 4 - Training, Tools, Supervision and Management:** This steering group focused on staffing, supervision, training, communications and tools.

A February 2005 memo sent to the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, Steering Group members and staff from P&D's Assistant Director is attached (Attachment 1) that elaborates on the work done during the early phases of the PIT effort.

### **Process Improvement Efforts in 2005-07**

Early in 2005, at the direction of the Board, the CEO's office was asked to work with P&D to accelerate and broaden the process improvement efforts. In early 2005, other process-related items were also being discussed at the Board level such as changes to the EIR procedures and creating Regional Boards of Architectural Review.

**Establishment of the Oversight Committee – February 2005** - The four PIT Steering Groups were combined into one Oversight Committee with members including applicants, neighborhood representatives, agricultural experts, Board of Supervisors' staff and P&D staff. The members were volunteers and most, if not all, had been a part of the earlier Steering Groups. At the request of the Board and CEO, the Committee met to discuss priorities and criteria and made recommendations to the Board as follows:

- **Process Improvement Criteria** – Make the process easier to navigate and more time efficient and cost effective, while maintaining quality development in SB County.

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- **Priority projects** – The five priority projects recommended by the Oversight Committee are:
  1. **Ministerial Permits** – Simplify the process for issuing staff level permits, increasing the percentage of permits that are treated as “truly ministerial” (not subject to discretion in their approval).
  2. **Appeals:** Streamline the appeal process and eliminate appeals for most ministerial permits.
  3. **Agriculture:** Streamline the process for agricultural permitting.
  4. **Customer relations:** Improve customer service and staff-public relations.
  5. **ZORP:** Complete the Zoning Ordinance Reformatting Project.

**Board Action on May 25, 2005** - At the May 25, 2005 Board meeting, the Board action was to: “Approve the criteria and five priorities for process improvement in Planning and Development and the plan for completing those priorities.”

### Process Improvement Accomplishments

1. **Improved mailed and posted notices** – In February 2006, the Board approved changes to the LUP noticing procedures. Previously, notices were required to be posted on a site after project approval which meant that neighbors were not apprised of a project until late in the process. The new LUP noticing procedures provide for earlier mailed notice to adjacent property owners upon application submittal, allowing neighbors to receive notice much earlier in the process before a lot of time and money has been spent on design. The earlier noticing is designed to provide ample opportunity to resolve issues much earlier when an applicant is more willing to alter the plans based on neighbor input.

In 2009, another round of improvements to mailed and posted notices was approved. Instead of a 8 x 11 inch posted notice, a new more visible 18 x 24 inch notice is being used for all Land Use Permits and discretionary applications. Also, the availability of environmental documents (Negative Declarations and EIRs) is posted on the project site at the beginning of the comment period. Response to these noticing changes has been very positive.
2. **Revised appeal process** – In conjunction with noticing improvements, the point in the process at which projects can be appealed was changed. Previously, the appeal process occurred late in the process after an applicant had invested a lot of time and money in a project’s design. The Board of Architectural Review decision could not be appealed until after final approval when working drawings had been prepared and often a contractor hired. The revisions to the appeal process have moved the time when a project can be appealed up earlier in the process, at preliminary BAR approval before final working drawings are prepared, at a point when an applicant is much more flexible in terms of addressing the reason for the appeal. Clarifications were also made as to who can appeal a project and the grounds for appeal.
3. **New Zoning Clearance process** – In October 2005, the Board approved a new Zoning Clearance process. A Land Use Permit (LUP) is required for most projects, including those

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that have recently gone through the discretionary process as part of a larger subdivision or development. The follow-up LUP requires noticing and has the potential to be appealed. The new Zoning Clearance process requires the same submittal material and staff review as a LUP, but does not require noticing nor can it be appealed. There are four categories of projects that now require follow-up Zoning Clearances instead of LUPs. These projects are:

- New homes in tracts approved since January 1, 1990
  - Applications following discretionary project review (Conditional Use Permits, Development Plans)
  - Projects in the Orcutt Community Plan area assuming they meet criteria based on the plan.
  - Other minor projects (temporary sales offices, overall sign plans)
4. **Revised coastal review processes** – At the request of the Coastal Commission staff, two changes to the Coastal Development Permit review process have been incorporated into the coastal zoning ordinance. The Commission allows for a waived public hearing process whereby public notice to neighbors is provided and, if no one requests a public hearing, the hearing is waived. This process already applies outside Montecito in the Coastal Zone and was expanded to the Montecito planning area as well. The second change related to the process for a project that has a discretionary approval (e.g., tract map or development plan) in addition to the required Coastal Development Permit (CDP). Because the County processed the follow-up CDP after the discretionary approval, both approvals were appealable, setting up a “double appeal” situation where the same project could be appealed twice. The Board approved changes to move the CDP approval up to coincide with the discretionary approval, thereby setting up just one appeal process earlier in the process.
5. **Land Use and Development Codes** – The Land Use and Development Codes for the County and Montecito areas were adopted in the fall of 2007 and fall of 2008. The LUDCs clarify and standardize the content and organization of the zoning ordinances. Approval of the Coastal Zone portion is pending certification at the Coastal Commission. Coastal Commission action is expected in March or April 2010. Staff will present any suggested modifications from the Coastal Commission to the Board of Supervisors for acceptance or rejection in 2010.

### **Current Oversight Committee Efforts**

The proposed Process Improvement Work Program is included as Table 1 to this letter. It focuses on two major efforts that the Committee and staff have been working on for some time. These are:

- Simplify process and permits for agricultural projects – Staff, the Oversight Committee and the Agricultural Advisory Committee have been working on ordinance amendments to streamline permitting of agricultural projects for several years. Revised draft ordinances and a Mitigated Negative Declaration are currently in public review. A Planning Commission hearing is expected to consider the amendments in February/March with Board hearings to follow in April 2010.
- Improve inter-departmental staff coordination on project review – The Oversight Committee invited department representatives involved in the development process to come discuss their processes with the committee. The committee members shared concerns and suggestions with the

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departments. Over the coming year, the Oversight Committee proposes to address coordination and process issues based upon recent examples of difficulties in the process with the departments.

The second priority work items shown in Table 1 relate to continuing to improve information that is available to the public, particularly through the department's website, and improving coordination between County departments involved in the development review process.

### **Other Department Process Improvements**

In addition to the work that has been accomplished with the original Process Improvement Team Steering Groups and the Oversight Committee, the department has been engaged in other process improvement efforts. The highlights include the following:

- **Accela** – The department implemented the Accela permit management system. This system improves project management and provides data reports necessary to effectively manage the permit process. A Citizens Access Portal is now available which allows interested parties to obtain detailed information about a project and its status through the department's website. Applicants also receive additional information about their projects through automatic emails on the status of their projects, as well as improved timeframes for initial contacts from their case planner.
- **Accela Phase II** – The department recently implemented the second phase of Accela which provides wireless access to inspection and enforcement staff, enabling staff to download and input information directly while in the field.
- **Procedures Manuals** – The permit processing manual was updated and formatted in electronic, searchable form. Manuals for virtually every function in the department have been prepared and used to identify any desired improvements in the function. The most recent example is the enforcement program (reported on to the Board on 1/19/10).
- **Standard Conditions and Mitigation Measures** – The department has updated the Standard Conditions and Mitigation Measures document which is used by staff to efficiently develop mitigation measures and conditions of approval for projects. The document is currently being integrated into the Accela system, which will ultimately generate project conditions and enable more efficient condition compliance activities.
- **Other Prototype documents** – Other frequently used documents (completeness letter, ZA and PC staff reports, standard Negative Declaration sections) have been updated for clarity and currency with state and local regulations.
- **Staff training** – The department continues to implement its training program, with technical training sessions, as well as customer service, collaborative negotiation and conflict management trainings.
- **Accessibility to the Public** – The department worked with the CEO to develop the Regional Boards of Architectural Review and to schedule Planning Commission hearings regularly in both the north and south.
- **Concept Reviews** – At the direction of the Board, the department established a conceptual review process for projects to be reviewed informally by the Planning Commissions for comments.
- **Solar permitting** – In response to requests by the community, and led by Supervisor Carbajal, the department streamlined the process for permitting residential solar installations, both roof mounted and ground mounted.

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- **CEQA Guidelines changes** – The department processed changes to the CEQA Guidelines and thresholds for environmentally beneficial projects.

### **Structure and Process Issues for Oversight Committee**

Several issues related to the Oversight Committee have been discussed by the Board of Supervisors in past briefings. A summary of those issues follows. Staff is seeking any direction the Board may wish to provide on these issues.

**Composition** - Since its formation in February 2005, the Oversight Committee has generally met monthly in Buellton for two-hour meetings. The participation has varied but has generally included representatives of these types of groups:

- Advocacy groups, including neighborhood watchdog and business-oriented groups
- Architects
- Home Builders Association
- Neighborhood representatives
- Land Use Agents

The Board has previously discussed the process of selecting members to serve on the Oversight Committee, weighing the value of formalizing the committee by Board appointment of committee members. Thus far, the Board has not done so, and members continue to be self-selected.

The Committee's membership and participation has fluctuated somewhat depending on issues being addressed and people's ability to attend monthly meetings in Buellton. There is a core group of about fifteen people, virtually all of whom were on Steering Committees, who have been involved in improving the process since its inception in 2003.

On several occasions, the Committee actively sought broader representation, targeting those representing neighborhood issues or environmental groups. These efforts have met with limited success. The Oversight Committee also experimented with a video-linked meeting in the hopes of expanding participation, but the meeting was not as productive as a meeting where all the participants are in the same physical location.

**Structure of the Oversight Committee** – The Committee is not a Brown Act Committee. Agendas are readily available and are distributed to over fifty people as well as anyone requesting notice prior to each meeting. All meetings are open to the public and information about the Committee is on P&D's website (<http://www.sbcountyplanning.org/PIT/index.cfm>), including when the meetings occur (4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month), agendas for meetings, minutes from previous meetings, Process Improvement Update newsletters, and other relevant information about the committee and its efforts.

**Committee Process** – The Oversight Committee both generates ideas for process improvements as well as serves as a sounding board for process improvement ideas that come from a variety of sources including the Planning Commission, staff and the public. The Committee follows a process that includes general discussion of an idea including data and other information needs to evaluate an idea further. Staff provides the data and a second level of discussion occurs where the issues and possible approaches to an issue are narrowed further.

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Once the Oversight Committee has thoroughly discussed an issue, generally a work session is held with the Planning Commissions at a public hearing to discuss the pros and cons of the issue under discussion. Once the Planning Commissions have given some direction, the item returns to the Oversight Committee for further refinement and, if appropriate, ordinance or implementing language is developed. Most issues that originate or are discussed by the Committee are reviewed at several Planning Commission meetings before being forwarded to the Board for consideration.

The Board of Supervisors receives recommendations from staff, the two Planning Commissions and the Oversight Committee. The Oversight Committee's recommendations have generally been in synch with those of staff and the two Planning Commissions, and have been adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

**Costs of the Committee and Process Improvement Effort** – Process improvement efforts are a part of the department's routine operations, and are supported by the work of many department staff. Staff involved in this effort includes the Director of Development Services, a Planner III responsible for the preparation of ordinance amendments, select staff from Building and Safety and Development Review Divisions from the North and South County offices, mapping and support staff. Staffing of the Oversight Committee and related process improvement work is supported by a consultant contract with Pat Saley. The consultant costs have averaged about \$40,000 per year since 2005, with the contract amount reduced to \$20,000 for FY 2009-10. Staff requests direction as to funding this consultant effort in FY 2010-11.

**Timeframe for Committee** – When the Board endorsed the criteria and five priorities in May 2005, no timeframe for the operation of the Oversight Committee was specified. The Oversight Committee has played a valuable role as a sounding board and generator of new ideas that have resulted in positive improvements to the process. All good agencies continually improve their procedures and how they do business. Process improvement is an ongoing effort of Planning & Development, and will continue with or without the Oversight Committee.

### **Fiscal Analysis:**

The cost to prepare this report is included in the Department's FY 2009-2010 budget under Administration, page D-300.

### **Attachments:**

1. Memo from Dianne Meester [Black], Assistant Director dated February 6, 2005
2. Process Improvement – Progress to Date

### **Authored by:**

Dianne Meester Black, Director of Development Services  
Pat Saley, Process Improvement Coordinator

**cc:** Oversight Committee members

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**Table 1**  
**Process Improvement Draft Work Plan**

**GOAL:** To identify development review process improvements that will streamline the process without undermining the integrity and quality of development in the County. The focus is smaller projects such as new single family homes and typical agricultural activities.

Work Item	Public & County review	Tentative Schedule
<b>Highest Priority</b> – Process Improvement efforts already underway		
<b>Simplify process &amp; permits for agriculture projects including changing DP threshold (currently 20,000 sf for all lots)</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete revised Draft Neg. Dec.</li> <li>Prepare Planning Commission staff report</li> <li>Prepare Board letter</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversight Committee</li> <li>Ag Advisory Comm.</li> <li>Planning Commission</li> <li>Board of Supervisors</li> <li>Environmental community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revised Draft ND – Dec. '09</li> <li>PC – Feb-March 2010</li> <li>Board – March - April 2010</li> </ul>
<b>Improve inter-departmental staff coordination on project review</b> (Env'tal Health, Fire, Flood Control, Surveyor, Project Clean Water, etc.) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with department representatives &amp; Identify opportunities for improvement in coordination &amp; communication</li> <li>Encourage upfront analysis to avoid late hits</li> <li>Encourage integration of Accela into development review process by depts.</li> <li>Discuss improvements &amp; opportunities with SDRC</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subdiv. &amp; Devel. Review Comm.</li> <li>Oversight Committee</li> <li>Planning Commission</li> <li>Board of Supervisors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2010 meetings – Each meeting have department representatives return to OC for discussion of progress since last met with Committee</li> </ul>
<b>Second Priority</b>		
<b>Improve communication with public &amp; applicants – FAQs, website, etc.</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suggest useful info for website</li> <li>Review proposed changes to website</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversight Committee</li> <li>P&amp;D webmaster</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early 2010 – Offer input to webmaster</li> <li>Spring 2010 – Review upgrades</li> <li>Ongoing process</li> </ul>
<b>LUDC Phase 2 Zoning Amendments</b> (identified during Zoning Ord. Reformat Project process) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review list of Phase 2 amendments &amp; make suggestions to P&amp;D re priority &amp; issues</li> <li>Review proposed amendments once P&amp;D drafts</li> <li>Encourage the County to be pro-active in changing the regulatory process, e.g., promotion of green building standards, Climate Action Plan, etc.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversight Committee</li> <li>Planning Commission</li> <li>Board of Supervisors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jan. 2010 - OC offer input on list</li> <li>TBD - OC review proposed amendments as drafts are complete</li> </ul>
<b>Review Tea &amp; Jesusita rebuild processes to see if any aspects are applicable to other projects</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review processes &amp; comment</li> <li>Refer to staff for any possible application to other process or types of projects</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversight Committee</li> </ul>	As time allows
<b>Review process for “beneficial” projects (restoration of habitats, etc.) to see if improvements possible</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subcommittee review typical process &amp; discuss with Committee</li> <li>Outline approaches to improving process</li> <li>Develop and implement changes</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OC subcommittee</li> <li>Oversight Committee</li> </ul>	As time allows



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### Attachment 1

#### COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

#### MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Supervisors  
Planning Commissioners  
Steering Group Members  
Planning and Development Staff

FROM: Dianne Meester, Assistant Director

DATE: February 6, 2005

RE: Process Improvement – Transition to Continuous Improvement

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Many of you have been involved in the Process Improvement project undertaken in the department for the last two years. The purpose of this memo is to summarize where we have been, what we have accomplished, what we are presently working on and how we are transitioning into a continuous improvement effort.

#### **BACKGROUND – WHERE WE HAVE BEEN**

In response to Board, community, applicant, and staff concerns, the Planning and Development Department began a significant process improvement effort in February 2003, by forming an in-house team to analyze the ministerial permit process and develop needed improvements. The team was made up of six staff members from the Development Review and Building and Safety Divisions at various professional levels. The team was facilitated by Tom Frutche. The team focused on the ministerial permit process as that encompasses by far the greatest volume of permits the department processes (approximately 6,600 permits per year), has the highest number of homeowner applications, and, while the vast majority are routine, a small number created the highest volume of complaints. The goals of this effort were to analyze the ministerial permit process and identify ways to improve outcomes while processing projects in a more timely and cost effective manner.

The key recommendations from that staff effort were taken to and accepted by the Board of Supervisors on July 22, 2003. (See Attachment 1) Recommendations ranged from restructuring ordinances to providing better information to the public to effect a positive change in the quality of application submittals. The Board of Supervisors authorized initiation of a second phase, which included community members, to begin addressing substantive improvements. The second phase began by inviting a broad spectrum of community members to participate. Over 150 individuals initially volunteered. Community members included architects and landscape architects, land use agents, attorneys, homeowner's association members, and other community group members. A kick-off meeting for this second phase, led by Chairwoman Schwartz and Vice-Chairman Centeno, was held August 25, 2003 in Buellton. Four steering groups were created to direct the effort. Three of the steering groups were composed of members of the community and county staff, and one group was composed of P&D staff, Human Resources staff, and staff from the planning departments of several cities in the county (Santa Maria, Goleta and Santa Barbara).

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As a result of the direction from the Buellton meeting, the four steering groups focused on separate parts of the department's operations that affect the ministerial permit process. Benefits from these efforts also accrue to the processing of discretionary permits and the overall function and success of the department.

- Steering Group 1 - Nature of the Interaction: This steering group focused on improving the interaction between applicants and P&D staff to make the process more collaborative and ensure it better serves the interests of the applicant and the community.
- Steering Group 2 - Permit Process: This steering group focused on the process itself, including case intake, assignment, management, and completion in order to ensure the process proceeds more smoothly and quickly, with more predictable outcomes and well-designed projects.
- Steering Group 3 - Policies and Ordinances: This steering group focused on clarifying five policy areas, including tree protection, grading, creek setbacks, big house criteria and height definition, as well as guiding the restructuring of the County's five zoning ordinances.
- Steering Group 4 - Training, Tools, Supervision and Management: This steering group focused on staffing, supervision, training, communications and tools.

## WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED

A number of focused teams (composed of staff and community members) were established to work on specific improvement efforts. Each of these focused teams reported a steering group. They also had a sponsor from the department's management team to ensure resources were available to the team. The teams have completed a number of items:

Zoning Ordinance Reformatting Project – This major effort was determined to be key in improving the permit process. The zoning ordinances, as they currently exist, have evolved piecemeal over the past 20+ years, resulting in unintended inconsistencies and a very cumbersome structure. The reformatting project is intended to add clarity, eliminate ambiguity and increase the usefulness of the ordinances. This effort is not intended to make substantive changes to the ordinances. It is intended to preserve and highlight the distinct values of the various areas of our community, expressed in each community plan. A focus group (ZORP) is overseeing and reviewing the work of the consultant.

The first major work product was the consultant selection and contracting process to update the County's five zoning ordinances. A Request for Proposals was sent out to major firms throughout the state with expertise in comprehensive updates of zoning ordinances. Staff, together with community members from Steering Group 3, reviewed the proposals and made a consensus recommendation to the Board. On December 2, 2003, the Board of Supervisors approved a contract with a consultant team led by the firm Crawford, Multari, & Clark to proceed with restructuring the zoning ordinances.

The focused team has been reviewing the work products of the consultant team. The Planning Commissions receive frequent routine briefings on the status of this effort. We expect the ordinance restructuring to be ready for adoption later this calendar year.

Application Submittal Checklist – In the past, incomplete applications were often submitted, which slowed down case processing. A focus group of Steering Group 2 developed an online application submittal checklist to assist applicants in assembling a thorough application for staff review. This has been a successful tool, helping to ensure the completeness of ministerial and discretionary applications and ensure smoother processing. The checklist is continually being refined based upon user input and will eventually be transformed into a decision tree to further assist in creating projects designed consistent with ordinances and policies.

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Suggestion, Feedback and Response Process – The department has not systematically solicited feedback from its customers. A focused team under Steering Group 1 developed a new process for obtaining suggestions and feedback and following through on them. Forms are available at the public counters, are mailed out with hearing action letters and final permits, and are available online. In addition, supervisors randomly call their planner's applicants to obtain direct feedback about their experiences in the process.

Speakers Bureau – The department is often requested to speak to community groups, chambers of commerce, trade organizations and classes. This process, developed under Steering Group 1, assists in the requests for speakers and provides topics on which the department is readily prepared to speak. Forms are available on line and at the public counters.

Novice Training Video – Many in the community do not know what P&D does or how to contact the department. At the direction of Steering Group 1, the department prepared a video introducing the public to the department and its basic functions. The video is broadcast on Government Access television several times a week and is also available for checkout at the County and public libraries.

Grading/Slopes/Drainage Standards – The department has often heard that applicants do not know what is required to ensure consistency with grading policies and where flexibility in the policies exists. Under Steering Group 3, guidelines have been developed by a focus group to provide for a rapid consistency finding with policies addressing grading and slope protection. If projects are developed within the standards, they are found consistent and processed quickly. Outside the limits of the standards, additional review and often conditioning is required. This effort was in direct response to requests by project applicants to have both certainty and flexibility in the process. This approach allows an applicant to choose their preferred path: certainty or flexibility. These guidelines are available online and at the public counters.

Urban Tree Protection – Many in the community believe that the County's past approach to tree protection resulted in property owners removing trees before applying for permits. Guidelines have been developed by a focus group under Steering Group 3 for urban tree protection, similar to grading. These guidelines recognize the importance of trees in the urban environment, but aren't so rigid as to unintentionally encourage property owners to remove their trees before applying for a permit. Again, the guidelines provide a path for a rapid policy consistency finding and quick processing by adhering to clear standards, as well as for flexibility through a more extensive review process. The guidelines reflect input from the Montecito and County Boards of Architectural Review, the Montecito and County Planning Commissions, as well as from public workshops. The guidelines will be presented to the Board of Supervisors in March.

Collaborative Negotiation and Conflict Management – In the past, the department has not always been viewed as helpful and problem-solving with applicants. To address this, all the managers and supervisors in the department underwent a 16-hour training course in collaboration and conflict management. All of the staff in the department are currently undergoing a similar 12-hour program. The intent is to build skills in staff that enable interactions to be more collaborative, with a problem-solving approach.

Assignment Queue – Some applicants in the past complained that their planner did not review their case for month and that the process took too long. To address this, a focus group of Steering Group 2 developed an assignment system. Ministerial project applications are now held in a queue until a planner has sufficient time to work on the case. This system borrows from production theory where production is enhanced when the input of work matches what the worker can produce. This results in planners being able to more quickly process their assigned cases, rather than spending their time juggling too many cases, answering questions about the status of the cases rather than making progress on completing the cases. The efficiency of the queue is being monitored in the north and south county Development Review Divisions.

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### CURRENT EFFORTS

Noticing and Appeal Process – Both applicants and neighbors have expressed frustration about the current system, with neighbors concerned about lack of notice, and applicants concerned about late appeals. A key effort Steering Group 2 identified was improving public noticing, to enable neighbors to be involved in the process earlier, avoiding appeals late in the process. The focus group reviewed the processes of other agencies in developing its proposals. Recommendations which include increasing public noticing, changing the timing of permit issuance, and restructuring the appeal process have been reviewed with the Planning Commissions and will be reviewed by the Board March 1<sup>st</sup>. Ordinance revisions and other changes will occur soon thereafter based on the direction received from the Board of Supervisors.

Website Upgrade and Information Management – Availability of information is a key to a successful planning system. The department's website has been incomplete and out of date. With the assistance of all of the steering group members and especially Steering Group 1, the department has been upgrading the website and ensuring the most current documents are available to the public and staff. Additions to the website include property information ("find my zoning", applicable policies linked to individual parcels, etc.), application forms, and ordinances. This effort is ongoing, but has been hindered by staff vacancies that have been difficult to fill due to salary limitations.

Agricultural Permit Process – In the past, agriculturists have been frustrated with the department's role in permitting, viewing it as duplicative of the Natural Resource Conservation Service review process, and resulting in good projects being abandoned. A focus group of Steering Group 2 has been working to streamline the process for beneficial restoration projects that are reviewed by the NRCS. These efforts have resulted in exempting certain projects from land use and grading permits and will culminate in revisions to the Grading Ordinance, expected to be processed in the first half of this calendar year.

Collaborative Permit Review – In addition to the training mentioned above, this focus group under Steering Group 2 has identified a list of short-term and long-term items to improve collaboration in the permit review process. The group is currently developing an implementation plan. Several of their recommendations have been implemented, including the submittal checklist, providing joint trainings for staff and applicants, and training staff in collaboration techniques and developing ways to be more open to suggestions..

Building Height – The current definition of height is difficult to use and subject to manipulation, therefore, not always having the intended result. A focus group of Steering Group 3 has been working on revising the definition of height to ensure a more consistent, predictable outcome. The group is testing the definition. Revisions to the ordinances are expected in the next several months. Presentations to the County and Montecito Boards of Architectural Review have resulted in favorable responses.

Creek Setbacks – Creek setback requirements and key definitions vary by community plan area and regulatory agency, creating confusion for applicants. A focus group of Steering Group 3 has compiled all of the definitions associated with creeks as well as the standards and policies of the County and other agencies (Environmental Health, Flood Control, Fish and Game). The group is now working on set criteria for adjusting creek buffers to assist in rapid policy consistency findings and to provide tools for reviewing requests for flexibility in setbacks. These criteria should be developed by June, with public workshops to follow.

Big Houses – An issue that many communities are struggling with is compatibility of large homes in neighborhoods dominated by older, smaller homes. A group of architects and other community members under Steering Group 3 are working on approaches to review neighborhood compatibility, especially when houses are proposed that are substantially larger than those in the community. The group is expected to finalize their recommendations in the next two months.

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Electronic Signoff for Building Permits - This group, under Steering Group 2, is developing an electronic version of the departmental and inter-agency final sign-off route slip for all building permits. The electronic approval will be sent out by the Building Division to all agencies at the time of permit issuance. When final approvals are received by the Building Division from the other agencies and departments, the final approval will be issued to the applicant. This electronic sign-off process will eliminate costly time resulting from the applicant traveling to each department or agency for the required signature for the final approval on their projects. It will create an electronic tracking system that will be accessible by the department and applicants seeking information on all permits.

Communication – Communication is a key issue in virtually every organization. A staff group of Steering Group 4 has been working on ways to improve communication in the department, between divisions, between management and staff, and with other departments.

Public Communications – The department will release its first newsletter to update the community about activities undertaken by the department this month. The department is planning to publish a newsletter once every two months. The newsletter will provide regular updates on continuous improvement efforts. It will be available on the department's website and at the public counters and reception areas and will be mailed and e-mailed to regular customers of the department and community members.

Continuous Improvement – Many believe that the department's culture has negatively impacted the planning process in the past. This group under Steering Group 4 has been working on cultural change, including values and norms, a critical component to the long term success of all the improvement efforts. The group has also developed concepts for transforming our Process Improvement effort into Continuous Improvement.

## **WHERE WE ARE GOING**

At the end of 2004, Tom Frutchey's contract with the department expired. We spent some time internally discussing how to move forward and transition from a "special" effort into a continuous improvement effort. After discussions with the steering groups, we have decided to combine the four steering groups into one Oversight Committee.

Oversight Committee – The Oversight Committee will be a combination of members from the four steering groups. The Oversight Committee will have both public and staff members, and is intended to reflect the diversity of customers that the department serves. The Oversight Committee will serve essentially the same purpose of the steering groups, including providing ideas for new improvement efforts, input into the efforts underway, keeping the department in touch with its customers, and, identifying new issues and concerns to be addressed. Public membership includes those existing interested steering group members, and additional members will be determined by the Oversight Committee. Staff members will be selected by the department. The Oversight Committee will meet monthly (starting within the month), and will be supported by the new Coordinator. At the first Oversight Committee meeting, the group will determine how they will conduct their meetings (appoint a chair, note-taker, develop ground rules, etc.) I will attend the Oversight Committee meetings.

Coordinator – Pat Saley has agreed to be the coordinator of the Oversight Committee, including organizing the membership of the group, making arrangements for meeting times and places, setting agendas (with input from the groups), leading the meetings, and ensuring minutes of the meetings are prepared and distributed. Pat will also be available to members of the committee for any concerns or issues they may have with the process. Pat will report to me directly and keep me informed of progress on the continuous improvement efforts and any resource or other needs the committee or focus groups may have.

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Focus Groups – Current focus groups established under PIT and working to explore and implement improvements would continue and new teams would be formed, comprised of staff and community members, as we embark on new improvement opportunities.

Thanks to everyone who has participated as a member of a steering group, focus group or other way to assist the department in effectively serving the community. I look forward to this next phase of working with the community and decision-makers to continue to make improvements in the department's operations.

Please contact me or Pat Saley ([psaley@co.santa-barbara.ca.us](mailto:psaley@co.santa-barbara.ca.us)) if you have any questions, comments or concerns.

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**Attachment 2**  
**Process Improvement - Accomplishments to Date**  
**Oversight Committee and PIT Steering Groups**

**Oversight Committee Accomplishments:**

**1. Ministerial permits**

- a. Improved Land Use Permit noticing:
  - Mailed notice as well as posted
  - Notice provided at beginning rather than end of process
  - Information available online
- b. Revised posted noticed from 8" x 11" to more visible 18" x 24" posted sign for most applications with larger 24" x 36" posted notice for legislative acts (rezonings and General Plan Amendments)
- c. Expanded noticing of most permits including:
  - Posted notice on both frontages of "through" lots
  - Posted & mailed notice of conceptual review by regional BARs
  - All LUPs get mailed notice to properties within 300 feet of project site
  - Posted notice of environmental documents (Negative Declarations and EIRs) at the beginning of the comments period
- d. Established new Zoning Clearance in lieu of Land Use Permits and applied to:
  - Subdivision tracts
  - Projects in Orcutt Community Plan area
  - Projects following approval of Conditional Use Permits and Development Plans
  - Temporary sales offices in new subdivisions
  - Free-standing solar energy systems
  - Overall sign programs approved with discretionary applications
- e. Combined Coastal Development Permit (CDP) and related discretionary hearings into one with only one appeal
- f. Combined action to name a new road with the subdivision approval

**2. Appeals**

- a. Moved appeals earlier in process before considerable time & materials spent on drawings, especially for preliminary Board of Architectural Review approvals
- b. Clarified who can appeal and grounds for appeal.

**3. Agricultural Permits**

- a. Simplified process for NRCS permit applications
- b. Nearing completion of proposed amendments to:
  - Revise development plan threshold for parcels zoned for agriculture from 20,000 sq. ft. to a graduated scale based on zoning and lot size
  - Simplify process for small agricultural accessory buildings
  - Simplify process for detached RSUs
  - Simplify process for housing for up to four farm employees
  - Simplify process for small-scale gates

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### 4. Customer Service

- a. Participated in upgrading of the Accela permit tracking system; potential to integrate other departments involved in development review
- b. Revised noticing for all proposed projects from 8" x 11" posted notice to more visible 18" x 24" posted notice
- c. Citizen's Access – Participated in improving P&D's public information and outreach including:
  - Website upgrades
  - Lookup and search for property information using a variety of factors (address, permit number, project name or parcel number)
  - Access permit history, permit and application status information
  - Provided for monthly automated email updates to the public about projects in their area
- d. Application Submittal Checklist

### 5. Land Use & Development Code (Zoning Ordinance Reformat Project)

- a. Combined existing articles into Countywide Land Use and Development Code (LUDC)
- b. Combined all Montecito articles and ordinances into a Montecito LUDC
- c. Working with Coastal Commission on approval of Coastal-related ordinances
- d. Provided waived hearings when no one requests a hearing for:
  - Certain CDPs
  - Time Extensions
  - Road renamings
- e. Shifted level of review for certain projects including:
  - Sign plans
  - Septic systems

## PIT I and II Steering Group Accomplishments

The most significant accomplishments from these early PIT efforts were:

- **Zoning Ordinance Reformatting Project → Land Use and Development Codes** – This major effort was determined to be key in improving the permit process. The zoning ordinances, as they existed at the time, have evolved piecemeal over the past 20+ years, resulting in unintended inconsistencies and a very cumbersome structure. The reformatting project clarified, eliminated ambiguity and increased the usefulness of the ordinances. The County and Montecito LUDCs were approved by the Board on October 17, 2006. The coastal portions of the Land Use and Development Codes are pending certification by the Coastal Commission.
- **Application Submittal Checklist** – In the past, incomplete applications were often submitted, which slowed down case processing. Steering Group 2 developed an online application submittal checklist to assist applicants in assembling a thorough application for staff review which has resulted in smoother processing of proposals. This checklist has been periodically updated as comments have been received.
- **Suggestion, Feedback and Response Process** – Steering Group 1 developed a new process for obtaining suggestions and feedback and following through on them. This process has since



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been updated including having a Customer Satisfaction Survey form sent to every applicant who has completed the permit process. The surveys are reviewed and any recommendations received are considered and implemented, as appropriate.

- **Public Information and Outreach** – The department has revamped its website and is constantly making improvements to it. Information about all aspects of planning in Santa Barbara County is readily available on line and at P&D's north and south county offices. In coordination with the CEO's office, automatic emails are sent to persons interested in a particular project or development in a particular area. Under the direction of Steering Group 1, a speakers' bureau has been established to speak to community groups, chambers of commerce, trade organizations and classes. A "Novice Training Video" that introduces the public to the department and its basic functions has been developed and is available to the public.
- **Grading Permit Exemption/Natural Resource Conservation Service projects** – In 2005, the Board approved permit exemptions for erosion control projects funded by the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service. The program has been extremely successful.
- **Collaborative Negotiation and Conflict Management** – In the past, the department has not always been viewed as helpful and problem-solving with applicants. To address this, all staff in the department underwent a training course in collaboration and conflict management to be more collaborative, with a problem-solving approach. This occurred in 2004, followed by Public and Customer Service training for all staff. The class is repeated twice a year for new staff. Regulatory Ethics training is a new class required for all staff in 2007.
- **Geographic team assignments** – In order to gain and utilize staff expertise about a particular geographic area, development review staff has been reassigned to geographic teams in both the north and south county. A ministerial team has been formed in the south county to handle the volume of those permits more efficiently.