

Building Permits and Inspections Review

Date	January 22, 2020
To	Priorities and Planning Committee
From	City Manager's Office
Service Area	City Manager's Office
Item #	PPC20-2

RECOMMENDATION

The Priorities and Planning Committee recommends that this report be received and filed.

ISSUE

The Building Permits process has, for many years, received numerous complaints. The City of Regina has endeavored to address these issues incrementally over time, but the issues have continued. By the summer of 2019, elected officials were consistently hearing of these complaints and issues had also been featured in media reports.

To resolve these issues, the City launched a service review of the Building Permit and Inspection Service. This report includes the results of that review and recommendations for improvement.

IMPACTS

Policy and Strategic Impact

The recommendations in the attached report support the priority identified in the recent management review, that the City become more *customer focused*.

The Building Permits and Inspections Service has the objectives of public safety, public confidence and economic competitiveness. In order to achieve these objectives, the service must be well-delivered and have the confidence of the public and the construction industry. If the City fails to diligently conduct plan review, permit issuance and construction inspections, the City may face legal liability for resulting financial losses, personal injuries or death. The recommendations in the report reflect significant engagement with stakeholders

and a review of the practices of other jurisdictions. They are designed to deliver on the service objectives.

Financial Impact

The implementation plan will be financed through the approved 2020 general operating budget. As the implementation progresses, longer term budget implications may be identified. The Administration will make recommendations to City Council through the annual budget process.

A study in 2018 found that the current Building Permits and Inspections Service is not operating at full cost recovery as intended. To close this gap would require an immediate 14 per cent fee increase. This report recommends that no fee increases be considered until the City can assess the true cost of delivering the improved process and demonstrate service improvements that build the confidence of the industry.

OTHER OPTIONS

The review process considered a wide range of options in response to a high volume of input from stakeholders. The attached report explores these options.

The City's service review methodology requires consideration of whether it is more cost effective to contract the service out.

Analysis of Option: Currently, the Building Permits and Inspections Service is supplemented by contract resources at times when volumes exceed the capacity of existing staff resources. One of the key challenges facing the current Service is the recruitment and retention of qualified licensed Building Officials. Indeed, the report recommends a workforce development plan in response to these issues.

There are few licensed Building Officials in the employment market at any given time. A private contractor would have similar recruitment and retention issues to the City. Furthermore, there would be significant labour relations implications to taking such an action. Given these implications, it made more sense for the attached report to focus on improving the service and systems that are already in place.

COMMUNICATIONS

The report was developed through extensive engagement with stakeholders and internal staff. Engagement with stakeholders will continue throughout the implementation of recommendations.

Improvements to content and forms on Regina.ca has taken place, and continuous improvements will be made in tandem to the development of a long-term communications strategy that is in alignment with the implementation plan.

Stakeholders including the Regina Construction Association and the Regina and Region Homebuilders Association will receive a copy of this report.

DISCUSSION

Building standards in Saskatchewan are regulated by the Province of Saskatchewan through *The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act* (UBAS). UBAS directs local authorities (municipalities) to enforce and administer the Act on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan. The UBAS regulations establish the code standards with which buildings in Saskatchewan must comply. While the City of Regina has full control over how it administers its permits and inspections service, it has no authority over the code itself. Improvements to the Building Permits and Inspections service cannot be achieved by amending the regulations.

The attached report makes recommendations regarding how the service should be administered in five key areas – General Service Recommendations and recommendations to improve:

- The clarity of the service
- The consistency of the service
- The efficiency of the service
- The predictability of the service

All of the recommendations are within the authority of the City Manager to either implement or authorize the necessary work to prepare recommendations for City Council. The introduction of processes that require a fee for service will require the approval of City Council.

The responsibility for implementation is assigned to the Executive Director of City Planning and Community Development, who will provide updates on progress to committee and City Council as required.

DECISION HISTORY

There have been no previous decisions.

Respectfully submitted,


Chris Holden, City Manager 1/17/2020

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ATTACHMENTS

Building Permits and Inspections Review (FINAL)