

Date: May 29, 2012  
To: Chairman Witkowski and Members of Common Council Public Safety Committee  
From: Art Dahlberg, Commissioner, Department of Neighborhood Services  
Subject: Communication File 111493

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information in response to the communication file in front of the Common Council Public Safety Committee scheduled for May 31, 2012.

The department has initiated numerous changes to improve the delivery of our services for our customers. Among the changes are the following:

1. The department initiated a quality control program for all inspection units. Four times a year, on a random basis, the front line supervisor evaluates the activities of each inspector for a given day. They evaluate the correctness of the decision making, the customer interaction, the recordkeeping and the quantity of work being performed. A meeting is held with each inspector after each review is performed and the results are shared. Any needed follow-up training or guidance happens following that session. Through this process we have been able to improve the quality, quantity, and customer service provided by the department.
2. A courtesy commercial inspection program has been established. The programs purpose is to provide information prior to purchasing or leasing of a building on what types of improvements will be necessary for the proposed use. Through this information, the purchaser or lessee can make a more informed decision on the viability of a space for their business. This reduces the potential for surprises during the permitting and inspection process.
3. DNS is currently hiring a fire protection engineer whose duties will include evaluating alternative compliance proposals for adaptive reuse of existing buildings. Through this process the department can help customer take advantage of the strengths of the building and minimize the weaknesses through an alternative compliance options in the building and fire codes.
4. DNS staff is now recording inspection results on "Record of Inspections" and leaving this document on the jobsite. This allows owners, designers, and contractors to know the results of the inspections and should reduce the need for follow up telephone calls with the inspectors.
5. Staff is expanding the use of advisory notices during the various periodic inspection programs. Critical violations will appear on orders, while deferred maintenance will be put on advisories. This will give the property owner the ability plan for this maintenance to be done during the upcoming year.

6. For periodic inspections, part of the protocol is to call the owner/manager to arrange for convenient time to perform the inspection. Cold calls are reserved for those facilities in which such arrangements cannot be made.
7. Staff is putting introductory letters with all trash orders that are mailed to property owners. They are intended to encourage property owners to voluntarily comply with the order and avoid further enforcement action.
8. The commercial construction code variance process has been revised and as a result the processing time has been reduced from a month to a week's period of time.
9. DNS and DCD have initiated joint training sessions on the new commercial construction code. Eight sessions have been held in 2012. This is resulting in increased uniformity in the interpretation of the code as well as developing joint policies to define how certain provisions of the code are to be applied.
10. DNS and DCD have devised a communication mechanism so that when a customer is sent back to plan exam by the inspector the plan examiner is provided with the specifics on what issues need to be addressed.
11. Supervisor approval is required prior to a stop work order being issued for a project. The supervisor notifies the commissioner's office and the development center on the reasons for issuing the stop work order.

In addition DNS is working on several changes to simplify several processes for the business community. First we are looking at the occupancy process in which certain types of occupancies are required by the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances to be inspected to determine that no violations exist. Currently this requires the construction, plumbing and electrical inspectors to inspect and approve the occupancy. With some notable exceptions, we believe we can streamline the process so that only the construction inspector would perform the inspection. If in the course of their inspection the construction inspector determines that there are potential problems relating to plumbing and electrical systems, then inspectors from those trades will be sent. This should simplify the process for those buildings that are well maintained and who have not done work without the benefit of permits. Second, we are studying the need to require full inspection occupancies for those buildings which have been vacant for period of time greater than six months.

Additionally, a multiagency review committee has been formed whose charge is evaluate all potential conflicts between various regulatory schemes and evaluate existing service delivery models for opportunities to improve effectiveness, efficiency, and timeliness. Current policies and procedures are being evaluated for revision to improve service delivery. As an extension of that effort, a focus group of our customers has been established to review needed service changes and areas of improvement. The first meeting of this focus group was held on March 23<sup>rd</sup> which resulted in over 2 hours of productive discussions. Twenty-five business owners, designers, developers, and contractors were invited to the meeting and the Mayor set the stage for the discussion with opening remarks. The intent of this focus

group is to allow for an ongoing dialogue that will help direct incremental improvements in the land development process. A second meeting is being scheduled for the month of June to discuss a range of changes to be considered to improve the land development process.

Finally significant work has gone into creating a draft request for proposal (RFP) to create an enterprise system to manage the land development process. The RFP is currently on the street with responses due on June 20<sup>th</sup>. This system is currently funded in the 2012 Capital Improvement Plan. When implemented, this system will provide many benefits including the following:

1. A common system used by DPW, DCD, MHD and DNS.
2. A fully mobile deployment for field staff that will allow up to date sharing and entering of data.
3. Electronic plan submission and plan review tools.
4. Transparency on where projects are in the development process.
5. Automatic scheduling of inspections.
6. Tighter integration and sharing of data between departments.
7. Automation of many current manual processes.
8. Provide citizens and businesses with up to date information on project statuses and complaints.
9. Enhance the communication between customers and staff.
10. Proactive management of inspection and plan review timeframes.

I hope this information is useful to the committee. Please let me know if I can answer questions you may have on efforts to improve customer service in DNS.

cc: Joanna Polanco, Staff Assistant, City Clerk