

Inspections Small Group Meeting NOTES | 2016

February 3, 2016 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. BC City Hall

Attendees: Hans Stark, Amanda Lanker, John Sims, Laura Otte, Joe Newman, Annie Stetler, Talia Champlin, Marcie Gillette

Welcome – 5 minutes

No changes from the January 6th meeting notes that were emailed to the group.

Wins – 10 minutes

More people are realizing the process is happening. It's nice to be able to say that things are being worked on when small group members interact with others.

Updates on Action Items

A special thanks to John for researching code, contacting the State electrical official and others to understand the process for inspecting Ufer grounds in footings (an issue that came up in the January meeting). It reinforced the complexity and complicated nature of inspections and state code mandates.

The chief building official will start on Monday (2/8). His name is Ted Hanson. He has previous experience in holding positions of both a building official as well as an inspector and has worked in a variety of communities that are both smaller and larger than Battle Creek. He also has a strong customer service focus. A coffee meet and greet is tentatively planned for February 17th from 5:30-6:30 p.m. in the Commission Chambers at City Hall.

Work is continuing on the AMSA Board of Appeals process. Additional information will be added to the application (jurisdiction, estimated time frames). City staff is in the process of gathering checklists from other jurisdictions regarding their appeals requirements and establishing a standard meeting each month (can also schedule special meetings if/when necessary).

The same day permit issuance has been in place for over a month. All permits were switched to same day issuance except anything that requires a plan review. No glitches were discovered in the process and it has not impacted staff's other work.

Marcie and other department staff members are working to identify outstanding inspections invoices. City staff are working to determine the best way to track invoices, determine responsibilities, and develop procedures for inspections invoices to allow a seamless process that is customer service friendly while also making sure staff is all on the same page.

Marcie is working to purchase and integrate a module for BS&A that allow for online permitting and scheduling inspections. It works well for subcontractors with automated

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notices. It also has the ability to automate work flows and help to increase communication and efficiency with the department. The expense has been incorporated into the city budget beginning with fiscal year beginning July 1, 2016 with an implementation timeline of summer 2016.

The plan review room is also being used as a shared space for pre-trials for code or inspections related issues. Previously, pre-trials were held at the Calhoun County Justice Complex which isn't always a customer friendly location. It will also allow for a better connection between staff and increase efficiency.

Group members had additional discussion about the vacant and abandoned ordinance. Some members felt that the requirement to have all utilities turned on at a vacant property wasn't reasonable. Marcie suggested a compromise to allow water to be shut off but require that gas and electric be turned on to ensure that the property doesn't deteriorate. A few additional changes were suggested.

Talia updated the group about her follow-up regarding a situation that happened with a small group member. Group members decided that a letter should be written to all Commissioners regarding the situation. A part of the letter should emphasize our shared commitment regarding our responsibility to be a champion and advocate and ask that they do the same. Talia volunteered to create a draft of the letter and send it to the small group for review.

Reflection and Planning:

At the last meeting group members reflected on their work together over the past 8 months and discussed how the work could progress in 2016. Due to time constraints, not all of the questions were discussed. Below are the remaining questions from the previous meeting.

- **Our Shared Commitments 2015 (listed below): How did we do? Did we hold ourselves accountable to these commitments? What did we learn? What would we do differently in the future?**
 1. **Transparency**- as agreed upon in the previous meeting, the small group would like to continue making notes and documents publicly accessible
 2. **Confidentiality**- the group feels it is important to be mindful of how matters are discussed, particularly identifying staff or partners by name and the implications of attribution of comments
 3. **Responsibility to be Advocates and Champions**- believing in Battle Creek, committing to sharing positive stories of the progress the group has made, and agreeing to serve as helpful resource in the community when people or partners

the group encounters expresses a concern or negative comment is important to the group.

Group members decided that we should continue holding ourselves accountable to the commitments above. Some of the learnings from the past year are: we had a hard time at the beginning but trust has grown and evolved over the year, we have been working to clean up processes and have made great progress, most of the work has been on Marcie's shoulders and the group recognizes this was in addition to her day-to-day duties, we've gone beyond "this is the way we've done it" to "why not?"

- **What will be our shared commitments for 2016? Do we need to revise the list? Add to it? Start fresh with a new one?**

The group feels it's important to work together to do what we can to see matters through and trust in each other enough to contribute to the overall progress. Therefore, another shared commitment was added:

Persevering through challenges – we commit to working together to see matters through, especially when the situation is "difficult" or "uncomfortable." We will trust in each other enough to persevere through challenges in support of shared progress.

- **What are our expectations? How will we confirm these expectations are understood and shared? How will we hold ourselves accountable moving forward?**

We are making strong revisions to the vacant and abandoned ordinance so that people will hopefully see it as a community asset. As we move through this process, we expect to showcase the inspections department as business friendly. The group could bring people together again to talk about the changes happening with the department and gather their feedback once again.

- **Working together in 2016: How we will handle challenges? How will we handle opportunities?**

There is an opportunity to work with the city's communications department to communicate with the community about the changes being made. The group should explore adding additional opportunities for learning about inspections updates and processes.

Identify/Review Next Steps, Action Items, Leads and Commitments – 10 minutes

- Talia will draft a letter to Commissioners asking them to be champions and advocates to help create a business-friendly environment in the city and will send it to group members to review.
- Marcie will continue working on action items.
- The meet and greet will be confirmed and sent out to small group members and the community.

Closing – 5 minutes

Next Meeting: Meetings are regularly scheduled on the first Wednesday of every month from 2:00-3:30pm at City Hall in Conference Room 302A.

Wednesday, March 2, 2016, 2:00-3:30pm City Hall Conference Rm 302 A

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