

# Inspections Small Group Meeting Notes | 2015

## December 2, 2015, 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. BC City Hall

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**Present:** Annie Stetler, Joe Newman, Archie Crooks, Tom Beuchler, Amanda Lanker, Laura Otte, Marcie Gillette, Talia Champlin, John Sims, Hans Stark

### “Wins”

- Appreciated everyone’s feedback on documents for Commission presentation, good team effort; Everyone’s presence at Commission meeting indicated importance of this work; even learned a few things about each other (new names, pronunciation)
- We need to remain customer focused, Commissioner had a good question about how to ensure progress doesn’t revert back to old ways. We need to make behaviors a habit, continue to communicate, change mindsets with/among each other
- Since involved in this process, group members are now able to differentiate between code and inspections

### Action item updates and discussion from last meeting

- Update on sub-group work to look at the law/code and a process for expediting specific permits (Committee members are Steve and Archie)
  - Marcie, Archie and Steve researched requirements of the law/code to determine whether permit applications need to be approved by inspectors or if other staff could approve them so that work could commence same-day rather than waiting until an inspector is available. It was determined that the permits do not need to be signed by a licensed inspector. Therefore, the group would like to begin phasing-in same-day permit issuance with the following types of permits: water heaters, furnaces, electric services and boilers.
  - Once Marcie assesses the impact on customer service staff, additional permits may be added to same-day issuance process.
  - The group agreed to a 60 trial period to evaluate workload and impact with check-in next month
- Group members should review the action plan document and provide suggestions/feedback to Marcie.
  - It was suggested that the group continue to pursue the vacant and abandoned ordinance changes to get an early win. The small group could help by attending Commission workshops and explaining the changes made. Additional input session will take place after the first of the year to further shape and refine the ordinance and then Commission workshops will likely take place in February or March. It would be helpful to have a timeline for the ordinance approval process.
- Chief Building Official update
  - From the mailing that went out to individuals registered with the state, six applications were received. Out of those applicants, four will be interviewed next Thursday. Additional information will be provided as more progress is made.

## Debrief from Commission Presentation

- The small group discussed how to get the Commission presentation/update information to other members of the community. The group determined that an email update should be sent to the larger group of community conversation attendees. All licensed contractors registered in the database should be mailed the update as well. An update could also be sent out in water bills. Marcie will talk to Jessica (communications staff) about the possibility of developing a communications plan to determine how to get the information out.

## Additional Work

- There was a suggestion to review code violation notification letters mailed to homeowners. The wording may need to be changed in order to make the language more customer service friendly without losing the intent of compliance. Suggested changes include: explaining the violation, including information on the benefits/value of maintaining property, explaining the process of how the violation was found (neighborhood review every 3 years), making the letter seem less threatening (without taking away the necessity of compliance).
- Develop a list or more simply define when sealed architectural drawings (or engineering or mechanical) are required and not required for both commercial and residential properties (maintenance and renovation). This is confusing and not well-known by the community.
- Identify/correct inconsistencies regarding wrecking permits vs. demo permits and requirements for such (requirements vary depending upon ownership of property – single homeowner vs. owned by entity)
- There was some concern about possible retaliation due to being involved in the group. Some group members shared examples regarding inconsistencies in processes/ordinance/code and interpretation. Marcie is aware of the situations and is working to understand where discrepancies are taking place (contractor understanding of codes vs. inspector interpretation or enforcement). Other examples shared include: alarm permits (ringing into central station vs. not), deck construction (plan required), fire stop/draft blocking (okay or not), roofing permits (either do an inspection during the process or not at all).
- Several updates and new code requirements are going to be in effect soon. It would be helpful if inspectors communicated the new changes and how they are going to handle inspections related to the new code.

## Summary of Commitments

- Marcie and customer service staff will implement same-day permit issuance for water heaters, furnaces, electric services and boilers. The expedited permit issuance process will be assessed in 60 days with a check-in at our next meeting.
- Marcie will develop a vacant and abandoned timeline for the ordinance approval process.
- Marcie will develop a list of instances when sealed architectural drawings (or engineering or mechanical) are required for both commercial and residential properties (new vs. maintenance/renovation).
- Marcie will reach out to other communities to see if they have information on their requirements for sealed drawings, roof permits, etc. so that we can use what other jurisdictions have in place before creating something new.
- Marcie will review the inconsistencies identified by group members and determine the best course of action (alarms, wrecking/demo permits, fire blocking/draft protection, roof permits).
- Marcie will review the language of violation letters to ensure text is customer service friendly.

- Marcie will investigate the possibility of increasing communication with contractors regarding upcoming code changes via email notifications, letters or hosting workshops on such changes.

Our Shared Commitments:

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 a helpful resource in the community when people or partners the group encounters expresses a concern or negative comment is important to the group

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 6<sup>th</sup> from 2:00 – 3:30 pm, City Hall Conference Room 302A**