

Finance and Economic Development Committee Meeting
March 3, 2006

Present: Committee Chairman Mayor Bob Sheckler, Councilmember Carmen Scott, Councilmember Susan White, and Planning, Building & Public Works Director Grant Fredricks. City Manager Tony Piasecki was out of state and not able to attend.

The meeting convened at 2:00 pm.

Mayor Sheckler opened the meeting and then invited Grant Fredricks to update the Committee on the progress of the Streamline/Improve Permitting in Des Moines Committee that grew out of the Des Moines Leadership Summit last August.

Grant shared four handouts illustrating the Permit Committee's work. The first noted that the 16 Committee members, representing a variety of interests (planning & design professionals, realtors, developers, public facility managers, business and at-large members of the community) had met a number of times since last August, and that the Committee was continuing to meet once or twice a month.

The four most important changes to make Des Moines more business friendly and the permitting process more customer oriented are: timeliness; simplification; Internet access; and improved teamwork. Four broad goals were established:

1. Reduce application time
2. Reduce applicant costs
3. Reduce city costs, and
4. Improve service accountability.

Six initial priorities were selected by the committee from the 49 initial ideas identified. City staff went through a similar process. Out of this joint effort, 9 improvement areas were selected to concentrate the Committee and Department's initial efforts. Most of these improvements can be made administratively, but some will require decisions or resources from the City Council.

Grant shared with the F&ED Committee a list of 24 specific ideas that the Permit Committee had identified, and noted that 4 to 6 of these will be selected to be more fully developed by joint Permit Committee/City staff work teams.

Grant also identified the following 8 specific recommendations that the Permit Committee was planning to make to the City Council:

1. Increase short plat thresholds from 4 lots to 9 lots.
2. Increase grading permit thresholds from 50 to 100 cubic yards for non-critical area properties.
3. Streamline the lot consolidation process.
4. Increase SEPA exemption thresholds as provided for in state law beyond the current 4 residential units (to 20), 4,000 square feet commercial (to 20,000), 20 parking stalls (to 40) and 100 cubic yards excavation (to 200).
5. Use the Hearing Examiner for public hearings on routine subdivision proposals.
6. Create design guidelines for the downtown.
7. Clarify the use of public alleys to serve future development in the downtown (one-way, two way).
8. Provide contracted building/site design resources to assist city staff in design review for large new developments occurring in the downtown and Pacific Ridge.

The F&ED Committee discussed in somewhat more detail the lot consolidation (#3), hearing examiner (#5) and design guidelines (#6) recommendations. The F&ED Committee encouraged the Department to more fully develop these recommendations for its further consideration.

Grant also shared 10 other suggestions developed by Robert Ruth's Development Services unit for consideration of the F&ED Committee in order to accelerate economic development in Des Moines. The list triggered discussion by the Committee of the future of Des Moines Elementary School, Zenith Park and itinerant vendors.

Finally, Grant shared a list of 15 areas under the potential jurisdiction of the F&ED Committee that are particular importance to the Planning, Building & Public Works Department. The F&ED Committee agreed that the 2004/2005 Comp Plan Amendment, the 2006 Comp Plan Amendment, completion of the Zoning Code update and Code Enforcement were also very high on the Committee's priority list. The Committee also asked the Department to explore ways to accelerate projects that would have a positive economic and City revenue benefit.

The Committee decided to schedule its next meeting for Friday, March 10 at 2 pm to continue the discussion of permitting and economic development opportunities and actions.

The meeting concluded at 3:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Grant Fredricks
Planning, Building and Public Works Director