

DATE OF MEETING October 5, 2020

AUTHORED BY JEREMY HOLM, DIRECTOR, DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS

SUBJECT BUILDING PERMIT FUNCTION REVIEW

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report:

To provide information to Council regarding the Building Permit Function Review.

BACKGROUND

Building permit application review and building inspection processes are critical to ensuring buildings constructed within the city are safe and meet the requirements of the BC Building Code. Building permitting is also important to implementing broader policy objectives such as improvements to building accessibility and energy efficiency.

The City's Building Inspections Section (the "Section") reviews building permit applications and conducts on-site inspections of construction within a framework of municipal policies and bylaws and Provincial regulations and statutes. The Section also administers and enforces the City's building bylaw, which includes investigation of complaint-driven building violations, and administrative and remedial action to protect public health and safety and reduce the City's liability exposure.

In keeping with the City's commitment to service excellence and continuous improvement, a Building Permit Function Review is being conducted to ensure building permit approvals are carried out by the City in an efficient and effective manner. |

DISCUSSION

Nanaimo has been experiencing strong development activity in recent years, which has placed a high and sustained demand on the services of the Building Inspections Section. In addition to building permit processing and administration of the building bylaw, additional services provided by the Section include liquor occupant load calculation, business license referrals, securing works and services, covenant conditions, development permit conditions, and the administration of development cost charges. The work of the Section is impacted by external factors such as building code revisions and changes to legislation, municipal policies, bylaws and standards, all of which add to the complexity of approvals, which can impact the efficient and timely issuance of building permits.

Efficient, timely building permit processing is important to applicants, property owners, business owners, and the building industry in order to plan and budget for new building construction, improvements to existing buildings, and changes to building occupancy classification. Resources of the Section have not increased relative to the volume of development activity, and

qualified Building Officials are in high demand. Efficient building permit processing is essential to ensuring Staff are able to carry out the important work they do as effectively as possible.

Nielson Strategies Inc. has been selected to assist in a Building Permit Function Review. The review will build on improvements identified through the Development Process Review Committee, the Core Services Review, and more recent process and technology improvements implemented following the COVID-19 pandemic declaration. The review will help determine whether changes to the permit process are required, and identify specific changes to consider. The review will examine permit approval processes, policies and procedures, staffing levels, roles and responsibilities, the use of technology, and communication methods and materials.

NEXT STEPS

The Building Permit Function Review will begin in October 2020 and is scheduled to be completed in January 2021 with a report and presentation to the Governance and Priorities Committee. The project will include a review of current City of Nanaimo building permit processes, consideration of building permit processes at comparable municipalities, interviews with representatives from the building industry, homeowners, and business owners who have applied for building permits, as well as Staff at various levels of the City.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Nanaimo has been experiencing strong development activity in recent years, which has placed a high and sustained demand on the services of the Building Inspections Section.
- The City's Building Inspections Section reviews building permit applications within a framework of municipal policies and bylaws, and Provincial regulations and statutes. Changes within this framework add to the workload of the Section and to the complexity of approvals, which can impact the efficient and timely issuance of building permits.
- In keeping with the City's commitment to service excellence and continuous improvement, a Building Permit Function Review is being conducted to ensure building permit approvals are carried out by the City in an efficient and effective manner.

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