

Memorandum



Date: August 5, 2020

Agenda Item No. 2(B)(2)
August 31, 2020

To: Honorable Chairwoman Audrey M. Edmonson
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carlos A. Gimenez", written over the name in the "From:" field.

Subject: Report Responding to Resolution Requesting the Appointment of Full-Time Staff Whose Sole Responsibilities Will be to Review, Process and Monitor Matters Related to the Construction or Rehabilitation of Workforce and Affordable Housing – Directive No. 192182

This report responds to Resolution No. R-1083-19, sponsored by Commissioner Dennis C. Moss, requesting that full-time staff be appointed “whose sole responsibilities will be to review, process, and monitor matters related to the construction or rehabilitation of workforce and affordable housing, including, but not limited to, in the areas of planning, zoning, permitting, public works and water and sewer connections.”

Construction and rehabilitation of housing projects can involve plan review and approval from disciplines and agencies both internal and external to the County. Whether it be through development approval (pre-construction) or construction permitting phases, plan review in all cases is conducted by specialized staff. A particular application may need review by over a dozen specialized areas such as Zoning, Platting, Traffic, Paving & Drainage, areas within DERM, WASD, Fire, Impact fees, the Building trades, the Florida Department of Health, Florida Department of Transportation (when impacting state roads), Aviation, and the School Board. For some of these areas, plan review approval procedures are dictated by State and/or local code (such as in the Building trades) which outline specific credentials and experience for staff approving said plans. In other cases (such as for Zoning) no specific state or code licensure or credentialing requirement exists, however, County job descriptions dictate minimum qualifications for staff reviewing plans. These minimum qualifications are predicated on ensuring staff is able to make independent determinations for compliance with governing codes. Therefore, all staff engaged in plan review must necessarily have familiarity with their applicable codes, and this familiarity can only be gained through years of experience in a given discipline.

Given the array of disciplines and trades and specificity of their accompanying governing codes, it is difficult to find staff credentialed or experienced in more than one plan review area. Hence, any decision to isolate plan review and approval under one set of full-time staff would necessitate a staffer from all applicable review areas. Based on available data, the volume of plan review presently associated with workforce and affordable projects would not warrant dedication of full-time staff to this task. It is important to note, however, that plan review data has not historically been catalogued and tracked in the various reviewing agencies relative to their project type. Only the Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources’ (RER) Building Division has had a historic tracking mechanism to index workforce/affordable project types due to the Board’s enactment of legislation mandating “expedited” review of these application types. However, data collected through this field relies on an applicant’s self-identification as such. This data shows 23 applications that self-identified as affordable/workforce applications in Fiscal Year 2018-2019. It is possible that this is an underrepresentation of actual projects, as applicants may have classified these projects as “government projects” (another form of expedite that is tracked through RER Building). Nevertheless, even if we assumed that all of the government project expedites had been for affordable (500+ applications), the plans volume would still not be sufficient to warrant separate, full time staff across the various review areas.

Resolution No. R-1078-19, sponsored by Commissioner Eileen Higgins, mandated that all permit reviews associated with affordable housing in all reviewing departments be prioritized. RER, WASD and DTPW have already made system modifications to ensure that all existing electronic plan review

systems (Energov for planning, zoning and paving & drainage, PWPermits for public works and E-builder for water and sewer main extensions) are programmed to allow applicants to identify their plans as related to affordable housing developments and to track and prioritize said plans. In addition, the virtualized electronic permit application portals created for Building and DERM permit applications, due to the COVID-19 emergency, allow applicants to indicate that their projects are affordable; hence, even through the pandemic, affordable projects can continue to be expedited through plan review. As data is accrued from Energov, PWPermits and Ebuilder, RER will monitor the volume of plans submitted across all review areas. Should volumes warrant specialized staffing, this recommendation will be revisited.

While plan volumes may not presently necessitate dedicated plan review staff, the Board's objective to expedite the production of affordable and workforce units in this community does warrant ongoing coordination and assistance from all reviewing agencies. Although this has occurred historically on an informal basis, a senior staff committee has been formed to lend greater structure to these efforts. This group will meet at least quarterly with an agenda to be directed by the prioritizations of the Public Housing & Community Development (PHCD) Director in order to shepherd projects and monitor concerns related to these projects. The group includes the following staff, with additional staff to be called upon as needed:

PHCD Director
PHCD Community Development Division Director
PHCD Development Division Director
RER Deputy Director
RER Assistant Director, Development Services
RER Assistant Director, DERM
RER Assistant Director/Building Official
RER Platting Chief
DTPW Assistant Director, Traffic Signals & Signs
DTPW Assistant Director, Construction & Maintenance
WASD Assistant Director, Planning & Regulatory Compliance
MDFR Director or Designee

The first meeting of this group occurred on July 24, 2020 with subsequent meetings calendared on a quarterly basis.

This report will be placed on the next available agenda of the Board pursuant to Ordinance No. 14-65.

Please do not hesitate to contact Lourdes Gomez, Deputy Director, RER, at 305-375-2886 should you have any questions.

c: Abigail Price-Williams, County Attorney
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