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# MIAMI BEACH

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## COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Finance and Citywide Projects Committee

FROM: Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager

DATE: April 19, 2012

SUBJECT: **STATUS REPORT AND UPDATE ON RECENT BUILDING DEPARTMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING A STATUS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE WATSON RICE STUDY, THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE, AND OTHER RECENT INITIATIVES AND CHANGES UNDERTAKEN BY THE BUILDING DEPARTMENT**

At the February 8, 2012 City Commission meeting, a referral was made to the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee of a status report and update on recent Building Department accomplishments and activities, as well as an update on the implementation of recommendations in the Watson Rice Study, the Development Review Process Stakeholder's Group, and other recent initiatives..

The Building Department (Department) faces many challenges. Over many years, the Department has developed a reputation for being difficult to navigate, unfriendly, and overwhelming to the average customer. Plan review turnaround times have been the subject of criticism. Many customers find the Department's processes confusing, and issues often arise with regard to inefficient work flows and day to day floor operations. On October 17, 2011, Stephen Scott began his tenure as Building Department Director, and was tasked by me and City Commission with addressing these issues. Below is a summary of recent developments and initiatives undertaken by the Department in the last six months to address the need for improved customer service, process improvements, and increased accountability of Department employees. Also addressed is the Department's response to recommendations contained in the *Building Department Organizational and Operational Review* prepared by TCBA Watson Rice (Watson Rice).

### **RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND INITIATIVES**

Over the last six (6) months, the Building Department has been implementing numerous initiatives designed to fundamentally alter the way business is conducted in the department and to promote employee accountability. The following is a summary of just some of the initiatives and developments that have occurred or will occur in the very near future.

## I. Organizational Changes

### Quality Assurance Coordinator

In March 2012, the Building Department hired its first Quality Assurance Coordinator (QAC), Linda Blanco, with more than twenty years of experience at other highly regarded agencies in South Florida. This position was created without the need for adding to the department's position count by removing the former Inspection Services Coordinator and reclassifying the position with a new title and new duties. The QAC is now responsible for overseeing floor operations, including the activities of the Department's Permit Clerks, correcting workflow issues that arise, indentifying issues that are likely to repeat themselves in the future that require long-term solutions, and addressing the concerns of customers on the spot as they arise. The QAC will also be responsible for performing audits on workflows, plan reviews, and inspections so that the Department may better hold its employees accountable for the quality and efficiency of their work product. In the short time since the position has been filled, there has been a noticeable improvement in the Department's daily "lobby experience".

### Building Operations Manager

In March 2012, the Building Department filled its vacant Building Operations Manager position. Antonio Gonzalez, former Building Official for the City of Hallandale Beach, Florida, is responsible for ensuring the smooth operation of workflows throughout the Department. He is also responsible for supervising the "Chiefs" for each review discipline, supervising the daily walk-thru plan review process, and monitoring and auditing the plan review process in the Department to bolster accountability on everyone's part for the quality and efficiency of plan reviews.

Both the QAC and Operations Manager positions are critical in increasing the level of accountability throughout every level of department operations, an important promise made to the City Commission. Already the addition of these two individuals has resulted in noticeable improvements in overall floor operations and customer satisfaction with immediate attention and resolution to issues as they occur.

## II. Customer Service/Outreach

### Stakeholder/Community Workshops

Every four to six weeks, the Building Department holds meetings with stakeholders (open to the public) in which representatives of all department user types (i.e. expeditors, design professionals, developers, homeowners, community activists) can learn about departmental initiatives and plans for improvements. Attendees provide their input on these plans, and discuss issues of importance to them regarding the challenges they face in dealing with the development review process. The Fire Marshal, Planning and Zoning Director, the Public Works Director, City Manager and Assistant City Manager all participate in these meetings as availability permits so that issues may be addressed relating to the entire development process. The meetings have proven very valuable as a means of effective communication with customers, and many of the items discussed in this memorandum have been discussed or presented at these meetings. The Department plans to continue these meetings on a regular basis to continue to keep stakeholders informed as the Department continues to evolve to better serve its customers.

### Community Outreach

The Building Department recently held a public forum in the City Commission Chambers for

permitting novices entitled "The ABCs of Permitting". It was designed specifically for those seeking simple permits who have traditionally been intimidated by the Department's processes, and to explain how some of the most common permit types can be obtained. As the Department continues to implement new initiatives and changes, public outreach events like this to various business, homeowner, and professional groups will be critical to communicating the Department's new vision to the public. Additionally, the Department will be making better use of its website, email communication and MBTV resources to advertise its offerings, changes to processes, and new developments.

#### Customer Service Training

The entire Building Department recently held an all day retreat and training at the Miami Beach Convention Center dedicated entirely to the need for improved customer service. The outside facilitator/trainer focused on developing necessary customer service related skill sets, and the City Manager and Assistant City Manager Jorge Gomez addressed the department about the need for improvement and the absolute expectation on the part of the City that Department employees deliver service excellence at all times.

#### Customer Exit Interviews/Surveys

The Building Department began conducting exit interview surveys with customers on April 13, 2012 to gauge their level of satisfaction with the service they received while at the Department. There will also be email surveys sent to customers to follow up on their experience with the Building Department. While these surveys may reflect conditions at a relatively early stage in the implementation of improvement initiatives, they should provide valuable baseline information for comparison purposes to gauge improvement in the future, as well as initial indications of effectiveness of new initiatives already in place. These surveys can also be used as one method of departmental accountability in the future to assure that initiatives are working, customers are satisfied, and that all Department employees are actively engaged in making them work.

### III. Process Improvements and Automation

#### Turnaround Times for "Drop-Off" Plan Reviews

Perhaps the most critical Building Department initiative (already presented at a Stakeholder Workshop) is the development of new five and ten-day drop off turnaround times. Currently, plans that do not qualify either for walk-thru reviews or 24 hour drop-off (both of which require that each discipline can review their portion of the plans in fifteen minutes or less), are placed in a queue with all other plans and reviewed on a first come first serve basis. These plans have turnaround times of 21 to 30 days. This causes significant pressure on plans expeditors to use only walk-thru, as they are faced with a choice between a same day plan review or 21 to 30 day waiting periods. This "all or nothing" approach creates significant stressors on the plan review system, overwhelming the walk-thru process, and creating tension with customers when they must be told that their plans cannot be reviewed in fifteen minutes and must be dropped off.

Beginning in early to mid-May, the Building Department will begin accepting certain permit types and revisions as five (5) day drop-offs, with a guaranteed five (5) day turnaround time (see Exhibit 2). It is important to note that this list is a working list, subject to revision if it is determined that staff cannot meet the timeframes outlined in the list based on demand. Some permit types may need to be removed from the walk-thru process and moved to processes with longer turnaround times.

After reviewing the workability of the five (5) day reviews given department resources, the Department will then consider 10 day reviews for certain larger permit types. This re-working of the drop off system removes the "all or nothing" pressure on the walk-thru process, and creates a more logical system that separates permits that require less time to review from major projects.

#### Private Providers

Florida law provides for a "private provider" system in which developers can hire and pay for their own plan review and inspection services through a private company even though the Building Official from each municipality must approve their use and ultimately sign off on the project at its conclusion. It should be noted that Fire, Planning and Public Works are specifically excluded from this process by the Legislature. Historically, private providers have been little used in the City of Miami Beach, and some customers claim that the City has been "unfriendly" to those seeking to utilize this "outsourcing" mechanism. Through discussions with attendees at the Stakeholder Workshops, the Building Department has appointed the Quality Assurance Coordinator as the Private Provider liaison for the Department. She will work personally with any project that seeks to use private providers and will make sure that their experience is a positive one. The Building Department will do quality control reviews as allowed by statute to ensure that the public's life, safety and welfare is preserved. The Department is currently surveying other agencies regarding fee discounts for private provider users, which could fall in the 25% to 35% range, and will report back to the City Commission if a fee ordinance amendment is necessary.

#### Accela Automation (New Permitting System)

Although discussed in Exhibit 1 outlining the Watson Rice recommendations implementation, it is important to note that the City of Miami Beach is in the process of converting from a relatively antiquated permitting system to a more modern and user friendly one (Accela Automation). The conversion of this enterprise system impacts many departments beyond Building, including Finance, Code Compliance, Fire, Public Works, Planning, and the Special Master office, among others. It has required massive efforts from all system users to ensure a smooth transition to a system that will better serve them. From the Building Department perspective, each discipline within the Department has had to re-map all of its processes and workflows over the course of several months in meetings with the software developers. This massive effort should result in significant process improvements for the Department by the time the system is implemented (approximately December 2012). The new system is expected to be more user friendly, provide better online access to customers, and allow certain processes to be streamlined with improved auditing controls that will be automated and no longer require manual controls to be in place.

#### Pre-Submittal Review Meetings with Design Professionals and Developers

With the expected improvement in the economy has come more large projects returning to the development review process. Among many steps taken to better serve these vital economic engine projects is the active encouragement of pre-plan submittal meetings. Meetings are now held with project design professionals (and others) representing major projects, along with a cross section of Building Department and Planning staff, to discuss critical issues before plans enter the system. This will help eliminate unnecessary delays, and foster better communication as projects work their way through the process. Developers and design professionals have strongly embraced these pre-meetings as effective means of streamlining processes.

### Cashiering Function

The Building Department is in the process of transferring its Cashiering functions to the Finance Department. The Department now funds one of the Cashier positions in the Finance Department. Further, two "ATM-like" payment kiosks (funded by the Building Department but controlled by the Finance Department) will be placed in the Building Department lobby this summer, which will allow customers to pay by check or credit card. This will reduce waiting times and lines in the lobby for customers who need to be there for plans processing, and will significantly shorten the wait times for those that come to the Department simply to pay a bill. Moving the cashiering function to the Finance Department has been a significant Building Department goal since Watson Rice pointed out the need for improved financial controls. These payment kiosks will make that possible while minimizing the cost to the City.

### Policies and Procedures/Plan Review Guide/Checklists

Clear written policies and procedures that are communicated to employees and customers are critical to the effective operation of a Building Department. The absence of these has been an ongoing concern of customers. The Department has issued an updated Policies and Procedures Manual and is currently updating its Plan Review Guide with expected completion in June 2012. The Plan Review Guide will be integrated and automated into the new Accela Automation system. The Plan Review Guide will provide customers and Permit Clerks with clear direction on which disciplines must review which permit applications and plans, depending on the work included. It will also point out any redundancy or inefficiencies in the plan review process, such as if a department doesn't have a need to see plans related to certain permit types, but is currently included in the workflows. Checklists continue to be updated and revised by the Department, and a complete overhaul overseen by the Quality Assurance Coordinator is in process. It is important to note that all of these documents, once created, require constant review and revision as best practices and the Department's processes evolve.

### Building Task Force

The Building Task Force, comprised of the Building Director, Planning Director, Fire Marshal, Public Works Director, the Assistant City Manager and other key staff continues to meet on a monthly basis. These internal meetings provide all involved the opportunity to discuss and resolve inter-departmental issues and were recommended in the Watson Rice study.

### Walk-Thru Improvements

Although it is not well publicized, the City of Miami Beach offers the most expansive walk-thru plan review opportunities in all of South Florida. This means that while many other jurisdictions allow only a few small permit types to be reviewed on a same day basis, or severely restrict the days and hours they provide the walk thru service, Miami Beach does not. The list of permit types allowed for review has increased over many years, and many plans and revisions to approved plans (after the initial drop off review) are seen exclusively via walk-thru by the Department. While this presents many logistical and manpower challenges for the Department, and is largely responsible for the crowds evident in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor lobby, the Department has chosen to focus on ways to improve the customer experience in walk-thru rather than limit or reign in a service our customers have grown accustomed to. With the addition of the QAC and Building Operations Manager, the Building Department is better able to monitor all floor activities related to walk-thru on a real time basis. On a daily basis revisions to workflows are required, unnecessary reviews eliminated, and refinements to the often confusing process are being made. In addition to fixing problems that arise on the spot, negative trends are noted, which then are considered by Department management, who meet regularly to discuss and implement key process

improvements. These process improvements are also the topic of discussion with the Stakeholders group, and many suggestions for improvements have been implemented based on their experiences as customers of the Department.

### **Watson Rice Report**

On December 16, 2008, the City accepted a report prepared by TCBA Watson Rice LLP Certified Public Accountants entitled "Building Department Organizational and Operational Review and Analysis". This comprehensive report reviewed the Building Department's operations, fees, and internal controls and came up with multiple recommendations for improvement. Since that time, the Department has been implementing the recommendations outlined in the report and has been reporting regularly to the City Commission on the progress made in doing so. Attached as Exhibit 1 is a status report detailing the recommendations of the Watson Rice report, whether those recommendations have been implemented or not, and the status of those that have not been implemented or are ongoing.

In recent months the Department has made significant progress towards closing out its responses to Watson Rice, and has approached the changes recommended in the report on an accelerated basis. Of 24 primary recommendations contained in the report, all but four (4) have been implemented. Of those four (4), the Department has made significant progress on three (3) (1. exception reporting; 2. requiring inspectors and reviewers to resolve inter-disciplinary and inter-departmental conflicts before being communicated to customers; and 3. Comprehensive review of permits plus system), and their status will soon be changed from "ongoing" to "implemented". The only recommendation that has not been deemed implemented or ongoing (researching the feasibility of outsourcing Permit Clerks) was put on temporary hold because the City agreed to not effect lay-offs during the 2009/2012 Collective Bargaining Agreement with the CWA. Exhibit 1 also includes information about additional Departmental accomplishments brought about in response to recommendations in the Watson Rice report.<sup>1</sup>

As you know, we have routinely reported on this progress via Letters to Commission (LTC) on a quarterly basis and will continue to do so.

### **CONCLUSION**

During the last six months, the Building Department has implemented many changes that will fundamentally alter how the Department operates, and promote efficiencies and increased accountability for all Department employees. Although many of these changes are in the early stages of implementation, there has already been positive feedback from many customers, as well as a slight reduction of the crowding and chaotic feel of the lobby. While there have already been many significant changes and improvements, there is still much work to be done. In the coming weeks and months, more organizational and process changes will be implemented, as the Department strives not just for improvement, but excellence.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2010 and 2011, other studies were prepared by consultants relating to fees (Maximus Consulting Services Inc. and JRD & Associates), and policies and procedures (JRD & Associates). The City amended its fee ordinance, and in recent months released and implemented a Policies and Procedures Manual, as recommended in these reports.

**CITY OF MIAMI BEACH BUILDING DEVELOPMENT PROCESS  
RECOMMENDATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS  
FROM WATSON RICE STUDY**

**STATUS REPORT AS OF APRIL 2012**

- 1. Ensure that the Building Department's formal (and informal) organization and responsibility reporting structure is in compliance with the Florida Building Code.**

**Status: Implemented**

The Building Department has undergone many changes in the past several years. These changes have included administrative items, changes in the organizational structure, and changes in systems and procedures.

The latest organizational structure adopted on October 27, 2008 ensured that the organizational alignment was consistent with the requirements of the Florida Building Code by allocating all of the positions performing responsibilities under the Florida Building Code to the Building Official. Furthermore, the name of the Engineering Section was modified to the Governmental Compliance Section to eliminate any confusion as to the nature of their work. Additionally, Senior Management is ensuring that the informal organization follows strict adherence to the formal structure.

- 2. Separate the duties of fee assessment and receipt of fee payments.**

**Status: In progress, completion expected Summer 2012**

The Building Department has allocated one position to the Finance Department to handle these responsibilities. This position has been filled. In addition to their other responsibilities, Finance staff has been trained in the Building Department cashing process. Finance Department staff will handle all cash transactions for the Building Department, and will also oversee the operation of two payment kiosks to be located in the lobby of the Building Department. These kiosks will be able to accept payments by credit card or check, will reduce lines by taking customers whose only purpose for being in a line is to pay a permit fee out of the queues in the lobby, and allow for stronger financial controls by the Finance Department. These kiosks have already been purchased by the City. Configuration is underway for interfaces between the kiosks, the Permits Plus system and the EDEN system. The kiosks and transfer of responsibilities to the Finance Department should be fully implemented this summer.

- 3. Implement customer service improvements.**

**Status: Implemented and Ongoing**

Customer service improvements are a continuous effort in any service organization. Some of the efforts currently underway include:

- The organizations' approach towards the customer begins at the top. Special emphasis is placed on senior personnel in the Building Department to have superior customer service skills.
- We discuss positive customer service experiences at our staff meetings and recognize those employees who have achieved positive experiences.
- We emphasize the City's Excellence Model standards for greetings, messages and call management to our employees.
- An all day retreat was recently held at for the Building Department at the Miami Beach Convention Center, dedicated entirely to customer service improvement, in which the facilitator and Department management expressed the need to exceed even the City's high customer service expectations. The City Manager and Assistant City Manager Jorge Gomez both addressed the Department and clearly conveyed not only the need for constant service improvements, but also the expectations of accountability on everyone's part for any failure to provide the excellent customer service expected by employees.

**4. Develop and implement a simplified permit fee structure and calculation methodology.**

**Status: Implemented**

The City selected Maximus Consulting Services in February 2009 to conduct a fee study. The study analyzed the City's direct and indirect costs, and developed a fee structure based on the level of effort dedicated to each permit.

The first reading of the Ordinance was unanimously approved on December 9, 2009 and the second reading was unanimously approved on January 13, 2010. The Fee Ordinance was successfully implemented on February 1, 2010.

Given the breadth of the regulatory process, the Department monitored the new fee structure to determine the necessity of revisions. On September 14, 2011, the City Commission adopted "the glitch bill", which contained multiple refinements to the original fee ordinance. Most notably, the glitch bill contained provisions that allow for the reduction of any fees that exceed 10% of a job's overall value.

Additional evaluation by staff and further input from Maximus and JRD & Associates regarding the methodology for fees for alteration projects and comparisons to neighboring jurisdictions will result in the Administration proposing additional revisions to the fee structure later this year.

**5. Develop policies and procedures to implement the Private Provider process.**

**Status: Implemented.**

The City of Miami Beach has completed the policies and procedures to manage the Private Provider Process and a program coordinator (Linda Blanco, Quality Assurance Coordinator) has been assigned.

**6. Develop a system of exception reporting and staff accountability and responsibility reporting.**

**Status: On-going**

The development of a performance measuring system is an on-going effort. To date, the Department has implemented almost 40 monthly, weekly and daily performance measures. Other measures continue to be developed and documented to ensure that the information is reliable and replicable. Examples of some of the measures are:

- Temporary Certificates of Completion/Occupancy and Certificates of Completion/Occupancy issued.
- Inspection Rejection rates, per trade and per inspector.
- CC/CO turnaround time.
- Plan re-review rates
- Number of past due elevator inspections
- QMB process time statistics
- Revenues by permit type
- Plan review turn-around time
- Number of expired permits
- Number of calls received per week by the call center
- Average duration of call (handle time) by the call center
- Percent of abandoned calls by the call center
- Average speed of answer by the call center
- Number of inspections with "no access" and daily audit control
- Daily audit by supervisor of 10% of building fee payments
- Number of plan reviews that are over the plan review target times
- Number of inspections carry-over to the following day

**7. Require inspectors and reviewers to document and support plan or construction modifications that are in excess of established thresholds or requirements.**

**Status: Implemented and ongoing**

The Building Department has implemented a procedure that requires inspectors to get pre-approval from their section chiefs prior to suggesting a modification to the plans approved by the plans examiner. To the extent possible, the Chief consults with the plans examiner to ensure that he understands both points of view prior to making a final determination.

**8. Provide adequate and timely training for staff.**

**Status: Implemented and ongoing**

The Department has developed a department-wide Training Plan that identifies all of the requirements for each functional group of the organization. This Plan has been fully funded since FY 09/10, and has been implemented.

Training courses employees have participated in include:

- LEED
- Flood Plain Management

- NFPA: NEC Essentials
- NFPA: Certified Fire specialist
- Elevator Safety Technical Advisory Council
- Certified Fire Protection
- Radical Process Improvement Seminar
- BOAF & FAPGMI Conference
- National Electrical Code Essentials
- Process Improvement: We Don't Make Widgets Academy

Training needs will continue to be assessed and the Plan will be modified accordingly.

**9. Enhance monitoring and control over Building Department fiscal operations.**

**Status: Implemented and ongoing**

In past years, the Chief of the Elevator Section was responsible for the preparation of the department's budget. Beginning in FY 08/09, the Department filled a position that has the fiscal operations of the Department amongst its major responsibilities. The responsibilities of this individual include the preparation of the budget and the monthly monitoring of revenues and expenses for the Department. A Budget Forecasting Model was developed to analyze permit activity and revenue for accurate budget forecasting. Monthly budget meetings are held to review these results and to carefully manage Departmental operating expenditures and salary projections.

As previously mentioned, relatively soon, the majority of the Department's cashiering functions will be split between Finance Department and new payment kiosks (controlled by the Finance Department), and subject to their strict financial controls.

**10. Conduct a comprehensive review of the methodology used to calculate all fees and ensure that all documents containing fee information are consistent.**

**Status: Implemented**

The Department performed a detailed quality control of all fee related publications to ensure that they were consistent with the Fee Ordinance and modified them accordingly.

Additionally, a quality control program was installed that requires the Permit Clerk Supervisor to randomly audit approximately 10% of the permit fees charged on a daily basis. During the post-fee implementation period, 100% of the fee transactions were audited to ensure consistency with the adopted fee schedule.

As part of the review by Maximus last summer, staff was presented with several permit scenarios to determine if permit fees were being calculated in accordance with the Maximus methodology. Staff demonstrated to Maximus that permit fees were being calculated appropriately.

**11. Provide adequate physical space for Building Department operations.**

**Status: Implemented**

The Building Department was allocated additional space on the third floor of City Hall in order to be able to provide the space for the electronic plan review work stations. The inspectors have been relocated to the third floor and the offices on the third floor have been refurbished and occupied.

Additional customer service space was added to the second floor lobby to improve the functionality of the Department's processes. A plans storage and a re-designed records management room, a payment and information kiosk, and the electronic plan review work station area were completed in March 2010. A monitor displaying news and advertising department initiatives has been mounted in the lobby to enhance the customer experience and promote new services. Additional customer service windows, upgrades to the lobby and the reconfiguration of some offices have also been completed.

**12. Create and staff a high-level customer advocates (ombudsman) position responsive to customers interacting with building/development process departments.**

**Status: Implemented**

The Ombudsman position was created to help businesses and homeowners navigate the department's processes. The Customer Service Manager currently serves in this roll. Additionally, the Building Operations Manager and Quality Assurance Coordinator positions recently filled by the Department have been tasked with addressing the customer overflow in the lobby area, expediting customers to the appropriate functional areas, answering any questions that customers may have, and increasing the level of accountability throughout every level of department operations.

**13. Require inspectors and reviewers to internally resolve inter-disciplinary, inter-departmental, and/or intra-departmental conflicts before they are communicated to the customer.**

**Status: Ongoing**

Procedures have been put in place that require inspectors and plan reviewers to discuss potential conflicts with their Chiefs prior to being communicated to the public. Directors of Planning, Fire, and Building will continue to hold inter-departmental staff meetings with all inspectors and plan reviewers to encourage inter-departmental communication and conflict resolution.

**14. Use issues or conflicts as material for training of inspectors and plans reviewers.**

**Status: Implemented and ongoing**

The department uses conflicts as a source of material during the Chief's staff meetings and the monthly general employee staff meetings. These are used to reinforce positive and eradicate negative behavior.

**15. Consider outsourcing the Call Center operation.**

**Status: Implemented**

Pursuant to RFP No. 08-08/09, dated January 28, 2009, the City of Miami Beach outsourced the Building Department's Call Center. Anecdotally, prior to April 22, 2009, customers experienced extremely long hold times, high abandonment rates and often never reached a live person to answer questions or provide customer support. After the Call Center's April 2009 implementation, callers can speak to a friendly, knowledgeable representative within seconds.

Approximately 50,000 calls are handled annually and the Department maintains at least an 80% customer satisfaction level. The initiative significantly increased the community's satisfaction with government, by striving for first-call resolution and promoting excellent customer service.

Under the new system, the average response time is approximately five seconds and the abandonment call rate is about 2%. Weekly performance review meetings are held to ensure that the Call Center staff is accurately and adequately responding to the City's needs, and additional review meetings can be held if performance requires. Additionally, any escalated calls are directed to a City staff member. It should be noted that the number of escalated calls is less than an average of ten (10) per week.

**16. Consider outsourcing the Permit Counter and Records Management Service areas.**

**A) Permit Counter:**

**Status: On hold**

The recommendation to evaluate outsourcing of the permit counter was adopted in the FY 09/10 budget. The department outlined the scope of services for the privatization request for proposal as part of the FY 10/11 budget process. However, pursuant to negotiations between the City and the Communications Workers of America (CWA), the union that represents the Permit Clerk classifications, no employees were to be laid off for the FY 10/11 budget year. The City has shelved the idea of outsourcing the permit counter at this time, but it can be re-considered once the current contract expires in September 2012.

**B) Records Management Service:**

**Status: Implemented**

The Department has moved expeditiously to digitize most of the City's Building records thus reducing departmental personnel to a minimum level, and thereby pre-empting the need to privatize the service.

17. **Analyze the effectiveness of the Department's technology solutions to providing customer support; and**
18. **Increase operating efficiency through the effective use of technology.**

**Status: Implemented and ongoing**

The objectives of the Building Department's technology initiatives are to increase operating efficiencies and improve the customer experience through innovative and user friendly technology based solutions. The initiatives include: electronic plan review, central record automation, a new website, online forms, online permitting, handheld computers for inspectors, vehicle tracking systems, QMB walk-thru plan review queuing system, a new interactive voice response inbound call flow and the most ambitious initiative, the permitting replacement system.

The **electronic plan review system** offers design professionals an expedited, environmentally friendly, standardized method of review while adding consistency and accountability of the plan reviewers. The pilot implementation began in September, 2009. The first phase of the project was implemented on May 24, 2010. Additional processes are being implemented by City staff and will include CIP Office and Planning Department pre-development applications. The City is breaking new ground by collaborating with external agencies, like WASD and DERM, to participate in the electronic plan review system lead by the City.

The **central record automation** implementation began in early 2009. The digitization initiative has significantly reduced the turnaround time for *most* records' requests from days to hours. The reduction in paper will save the City valuable resources and promote a 'green' environment. The initiative makes valuable information more accessible to the community. All records dated from 1925 to present are available in digital format within a few days. The Records Section is in the process of splicing large records into individual permits. Once this exercise is complete, the records request turnaround time will be reduced from days to hours for *all* records.

The Building Department launched an intuitively designed and highly functional **website** in January, 2009. Web-enabled features include online payments, the ability for contractors to pull sub-permits to approved master permits, and the capacity for home owners to pull 'remove and replace' type permits over the internet. Online Permit Application is something that will be included with the upgrade of the permitting system, discussed below.

Building inspectors are equipped with **handheld computers** that are used to enter real time inspection results; these results are displayed on the Department's website. The implementation eliminates the need for redundant entries, provides the ability to monitor inspection routes and increases accountability.

**Automated Vehicle Locating systems** have been installed in the Building inspectors', Code Compliance officers' and Parking Enforcement specialists' cars to improve daily efficiency and serve as an internal control tool.

The Department successfully launched **QMB, the plan review walk-thru queuing system**, in August, 2009. The application enables complete transparency for customers walking plans through the review process. This system is utilized by the City of Miami and was highly recommended by our customers as the **best system** around; QMB increases the community's satisfaction with the Department by

expediting the review process and making the experience completely transparent to the customers.

A revised **interactive voice response (IVR)** call flow was designed and implemented in August, 2009. The new call flow provides for clear options to our customers addressing their most common questions. It also allows for a live response within approximately four seconds of selecting the option to speak with a representative.

**19. Review and analyze staffing levels.**

**Status: Implemented and ongoing**

Performance levels and standards were developed for all major staffing groups, and a mechanism was established to account for and monitor staffing levels based on fluctuations in demand. Part-time staff was hired to decrease wait time at the permit counter thereby reducing the average wait time from one hour to 30 minutes. Additionally, contracted services in the permit counter, inspection and plan review disciplines provide for additional flexibility and long term cost savings for the department.

**20. Appoint an individual to coordinate the efforts of the building/development process departments.**

**Status: Implemented**

The Building Director was appointed to chair the Building Development Task Force's Interdepartmental Team. The Building Director will facilitate communication and guide the process improvement initiatives among the Building Development Task Force team members. In addition, the Building Director coordinates responses and directs staff and resources to facilitate building development projects. The Task force includes the Fire Marshal, Public Works Director, the Building Official, Planning and Zoning Director, the Assistant City Manager, and other associated staff. They meet monthly and more frequently when necessary to address issues of concern.

**21. Develop a formal policies and procedures manual for all building/development process disciplines.**

**Status: Implemented and Ongoing**

JRD & Associates, Inc. released its review of the Building Department's Policies and Procedures in June of 2011. The review included a draft manual for the Department's future use. The lack of a single recognized manual had long been considered an operational impediment for the Department. The draft manual was from a very high level perspective, and was not intended to serve as an instructional manual of the Department's process. The manual has been put in effect by the Department and is being revised and refined on an ongoing basis as processes change, and an instructional manual is being developed in-house by staff.

**22. Complete the process of developing plans review and inspection checklists.**

**Status: In Progress**

The implementation of the plan review checklist is being performed concurrently with the implementation of the electronic plan review system, as this is one of the system requirements to ensure uniform review and standards. The plan review checklists are incorporated into the electronic plan review process and are being implemented concurrently with the system.

The implementation of the inspection checklist will be completed with the implementation of the new permitting system (Accela Automation, discussed below), as the current system does not support the ability to have checklists that are targeted to a specific inspection type.

**23. Enhance staff knowledge and use of Department technology.**

**Status: In progress and ongoing**

In general, the staff's knowledge of technology is very limited and it significantly diminishes their productivity. Department staff continues to identify and implement simple technology based solutions for existing operations. The Administrative Support Section has received additional Microsoft Office product training. Targeted systems training for the operating division will be ongoing depending on the individual needs of staff.

**24. Perform a comprehensive review and analysis of the Permits Plus system.**

**Status: In progress**

Based on the review of the existing system, it was determined that the best course of action was to completely replace the system.

The permitting system replacement will include permitting, inspections, code enforcement and the business tax receipt. Approximately one half of City departments utilize the current permitting system. The new system will significantly increase operating efficiencies, provide extensive auditing and security capabilities, contain internal and external automated notification mechanisms to streamline operations and enrich the customers' overall experience with the Building Department.

The City Commission approved Accela Automation to furnish the City with its new multi-disciplinary permitting system. Several agencies throughout the City are currently participating in the development and review process. It is expected that the new system will be operational by approximately December 2012.

## WALK-THRU AND 24 HOUR PROCESSING:

- A/C Units
- Antennas and Equipment Shelter on Roof Top
- Awnings/Canopies/Carports
- Balconies/Guard/Glass Railings (Single Family only)
- ~~Balcony Repairs~~
- Boat Lifts (Multi-Family and Residential)
- Bus Way Installation
- Cabinet/Counters (Multi-Family and Commercial)
- Card Access Control
- ~~Civil Work~~
- Concrete Slabs (Single Family)
- Demolition (Total, Non-Historic Post 1973)
- Demolition (Partial, Simple Only)
- Docks (Single Family, Without Conditional Use)
- Doors
- Door Roll-Up
- Driveways (Single Family)
- Driveways /Parking (Multi-Family and Commercial)
- Driveways (Sealing/Coating)
- ~~Parking Lots~~
- Paving Parking Lots
- Empty Conduit (Future Low Voltage Installation)
- Eyebrow Repair
- Fence / Gates / CBS Wall (Single Family, Multi-Family and Commercial)
- Fence / Gates / CBS Wall / Temporary (With Motor Or Gate Lighting)
- Fire Stopping (Simple Only)
- Free Standing Service (Parking Lot Lighting, Irrigation, Etc.)
- Floors (Tiles/Wood/Marble and Balcony)
- Fountains
- Garage Doors
- Gas/Heat Pump
- Generator (Single Family, 45 KW or Less)
- ~~Glass Glazing~~
- Intercom (Multi-Family)
- Irrigation and Landscaping
- Heating Restaurant Hood
- Lightweight Concrete
- Minor Fire Permits (1-5 Components in Existing System)
- Minor Single Family Remodel (Bath or Kitchen)
- Paint Exterior
- ~~Post Tensions~~
- Ramp/Wheel Chair
- Railings
- Roofs
- Sandblast/Marcite
- Shutters (Single Family)
- Signage
- Windows (Single Family)
- 1-2 Page Revisions

## 5 BUSINESS DAY PROCESSING:

- Concrete Slab on Grade
- Dock and Seawalls (Commercial)
- Doors (All Occupancies Except Single Family Residential)
- Elevator Permits
- Kitchen or Bath Remodel (Condo Single Unit)
- New Single Family Residence or Addition (Limited to 1,500 Sq Ft)
- Revisions – Limited to 3 Pages per Trade for a Maximum of 12 Pages
- Partial Demolition (Other than 24 Hour Types)
- Pool/Spa (Single Family Residential)
- Shutters (All Occupancies Except Single Family Residential)
- Special Events (All Components)
- Structural Shop Drawings
- Temporary Trailers
- Waterproofing
- Windows (All Occupancies Except Single Family Residential)