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CLARK COUNTY
WASHINGTON

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Memorandum

TO: Board of Clark County Councilors
Mark McCauley, County Manager

FROM: Marty Snell, Director 

DATE: August 11, 2016

SUBJECT: Building and Land Use Review Fees – Proposed Changes

Last year, Community Development retained the professional services of financial consultant Paul Lewis to review the costs of service and the fees related to building and land use permits. Our consultant worked with the department to analyze data from the permitting system, the financial system, and staff's experience with the work and revenue. We also collected information on how fees compare to those in other jurisdictions and obtained feedback on our fees and services from several of our customers. That effort resulted in the following summary presented at a March 16 Board work session:

- Selected Land Use Review fee adjustments
- Lower commercial Building Permit fees
- Directive to establish a framework for General Fund support and Building fund reserves
- Monitor cost recovery and reserves annually
- Adjust staffing to maintain service levels
- Adjust fees as needed to cover expenses and fund needed reserves

The department shared the same information with the Development and Engineering Advisory Board on April 14. They provided excellent feedback for us to consider on the draft recommendations. A few notable suggestions were to lower the cost of entry, reduce the cost for smaller projects, and to scale the cost for larger projects (with the idea that very large site plans and subdivisions require more work and should have higher fees).

Since May the team has been working on a proposal to bring to the Board for its review and consideration. The proposal follows this memo. High-level points to the proposed fee changes are:

For Land Use Review

- Reduce pre-application conference fee
- Simplify and reduce home business permit fees
- Reduce legal lot determination and Planning Director review fees
- Reduce post decision review and SEPA fees
- Change the site plan and subdivision fees back to a 'base fee plus' model
- Combine 'Fast Lane' and '60 Day Review' into a single type named '60-Day/Concurrent Review'
- Add a fee for 'application submittal' for Type II or III reviews
- Moved the 'Final' review fees section from the Development Engineering fee table

For Building

- Reduce fees for small residential projects
- Reduce fees for all commercial projects
- Scale fees to 'level off' for commercial projects over \$5m valuation
- Eliminate certain fees in favor of the small residential projects fees

While considering a narrow range of possible changes, we also reviewed the impact to the funds relative to maintaining core staffing and service levels and carrying a reasonable fund balance forward. With the recent and forecasted activity in the building and development arena, the proposed changes would support appropriate staffing and service levels and would maintain a healthy fund balance to cover work in progress and future technology needs. The projected fund balance would also allow us to responsibly manage a reduction in expenses in the event of any downturn in the local building and/or development industry.