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City Council

Proposed Process for Improving the City's Approach to Community Development and Land Use Approvals

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Agenda Item:

Proposed Process for Improving the City's Approach to Community Development and Land Use Approvals

Issue:

Consider ways to improve the City's community development and permitting process.

Committee Recommendation:

This proposal was reviewed by the Land Use and Environment Committee at its March 2013 meeting. The Committee asked that it be directed to the full City Council for final consideration.

City Manager's Recommendation:

Provide input to the staff about the process to evaluate and implement improvements to the City's community development and permitting processes.

Staff Contact:

Steve Hall, City Manager, 360.753.8370

Keith Stahley, Director of Community Planning and Development, 360.753.8227

Presenter(s):

Steve Hall, City Manager

Background and Analysis:

Growth and change in any community creates concern and potential conflict. Olympia is no different.

Over the years, the City has established a number of processes and systems to regulate growth in an attempt to create high quality development in our community. In January of 2013, at its annual retreat, the City Council listed changing the culture of community development within the City as one of its primary goals. The main problems identified by the City Council, stakeholders, and staff are that the City's current processes for reviewing and permitting land use development and redevelopment often results in

- conflict, not collaboration
- surprise and unpredictability for neighbors, landowners, and investors
- decisions that create winners and losers instead of compromise and balance
- general resistance to growth and change due to the uncertainty of the process and outcome, and

- the City organization is stuck in the middle.

The City believes it can do better in processing and evaluating growth and change within the community.

Attached is a proposal to bring in professional assistance to evaluate the City's systems for managing growth and development and to seek best practices from other communities in how to improve our system. The specific goal for the City is to achieve:

A Proactive Community Development Function that Includes Meaningful and Early Neighborhood and Stakeholder Involvement that Promotes High Quality Growth and Commerce in the City.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

A number of stakeholders will be consulted during this process to help specify the current problem and to give feedback about potential changes in the City's system.

Options:

1. Direct staff to proceed with the request for professional assistance as outlined in the attached.
2. Modify the approach.
3. Decide not to seek outside assistance in the effort to improve the City's community development process.

Financial Impact:

In 2012 the City Council set aside funding for support of this effort. However, until we have an opportunity to better engage with consultants about this specific scope of work, there is no budget estimate for this effort. After an initial scope of work is developed, staff will return to Council for action on the final scope and budget.