



City Council

Approval of Appropriation Ordinance in the Amount of \$67,736 for Additional Community Planning and Development Staff

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Title

Approval of Appropriation Ordinance in the Amount of \$67,736 for Additional Community Planning and Development Staff

Recommended Action

Finance Committee Recommendation:

Move to approve appropriation ordinance in the amount of \$67,736 to fund three positions in Community Planning and Development for the remainder of 2015.

City Manager Recommendation:

Move to approve the recommendation of the Finance Committee.

Report

Issue:

Whether or not to appropriate permit revenue to cover the costs of funding of three additional staff to meet development demands.

Staff Contact:

Karen Kenneson, Business Manager, Community Planning and Development, 360.753.8277

Presenter:

None. Consent Calendar

Background and Analysis:

Background and analysis have not changed from first to second reading.

During the economic downturn there was a significant decline in new construction and the corresponding revenue. Since 2008, Community Planning and Development (CP&D) has cut 12.75 positions 10 of which were directly related to permitting and inspection. Development activity has been on the rise for the past three years and the Department is struggling to meet customer demand due to lack of adequate staffing. Commercial permit are already well above those of the previous three years. The Department is also on pace to conduct more than 13,000 inspections.

The increase in construction translates to increased revenue to support this work.

Earlier in 2015, City Council approved the addition of a Building Plans Examiner and a combination Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer. The increased development activity that necessitated the addition of these positions also creates the need for additional positions to support this work:

Office Specialist II

Additional administrative support is necessary to aid the work of the planning and building divisions' increased permit and project loads. One half of this position is already funded through professional services and provides night meeting support to the seven Council Committees, boards and commissions that CP&D supports.

Permit Specialist

An additional Permit Specialist is needed for front counter customer support and permit issuance. In 2014 a Permit Specialist was reclassified to an Assistant Planner to support current planning and now that development activity has increased, the Permit Specialist needs to be replaced.

Associate Planner

An additional Associate Planner is needed to handle land use projects and give Current Planning the capacity to incorporate more effective land use field inspections into the development process and build GIS capacity. This addition will help to improve customer service levels as well.

It takes full Council approval to add staff mid-year and it takes Council authority to appropriate the revenue. Staff is requesting to appropriate \$67,736 to cover the costs for 2015 (\$60,376 for salary & benefits for three months, plus \$7,360 for computers and other necessary equipment and supplies for the additional staff.) The additional costs will be reflected in the 2016 budget.

Neighborhood/Community Interests:

Adding additional staff will allow staff to respond to neighborhood interests more effectively.

Options:

1. Approve the appropriation ordinance to fund additional staff in CP&D.
2. Do not approve the appropriation ordinance and accept longer permit approval timelines and reduced customer service.

Financial Impact:

The difference between taxes and fees is fees may only be charged to "reasonably" cover the costs of expenses. Staff is proposing to add three additional staff. Salary, benefits and equipment for the three employees for the remainder of 2015 is \$67,736 that will be covered by projected permit and inspection revenues.

The additional positions will be funded through CP&D revenues, with the exception of approximately 0.3 to 0.5 of the Office Specialist II (night meeting support), which will be funded with existing professional services funds in the Current Planning budget. There is adequate funding for this request.