



Board Report

File #: 23-121, Version: 1

Receive a presentation from the Housing and Community Development Department and conduct a workshop on its planning and construction permit processes, staffing and permit streamlining efforts.

Proposed CEQA Action: Find that the presentation and workshop is not a “project,” and therefore, not subject to CEQA.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Receive a presentation from the Housing and Community Development Department and conduct a workshop on its planning and construction permit processes, staffing and permit streamlining efforts.
- b. Find that the presentation and workshop is not a “project,” and therefore, not subject to CEQA.
- c. Provide direction, as appropriate.

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY:

On September 29, 2020, the Board of Supervisors adopted Ordinance No. 5342 dissolving the Resource Management Agency (RMA) and creating two new departments: Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) and Community Services Department, now Public Works Facilities and Parks Department (PWFP). HCD’s mission is to provide integrated planning and building permitting services to customers and stakeholders to ensure reasonable and safe development while protecting natural resources.

At the request of the Chair Alejo, HCD will be presenting details on the planning and building permit processes, its staffing, and some permitting streamlining initiatives. The Board of Supervisors will then be asked to conduct a workshop related to the presentation. The presentation and workshop provide an opportunity for HCD staff to inform the Board and the public on the various dynamics of planning and construction permit processes, its staffing and to share some of HCD contemplated streamlining efforts. It also provides an opportunity for the Board to provide direction on its permitting priorities. Although HCD has many other functions, this presentation and workshop are focused on the permitting topical areas.

DISCUSSION:

HCD’s permit processing is integrated because the Permit Center, Planning Services, Engineering Services, Environmental Services and Buildings Services are all divisions or sections within HCD rather than being outside agencies. Other partners in the permit process include PWFP, fire agencies and the Environmental Health Bureau, which are outside of the Department. HCD and its partner agencies handle the discretionary and ministerial reviews of permit applications. A detailed discussion related to the permitting is provided as **Attachment 1** and will be presented to the Board in more detail verbally by staff during the presentation.

As shown in **Attachment 2**, HCD has 103 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. Not all the FTEs are directly involved in the permitting processes. For example, the nine positions within the Advance Planning section have little involvement in the day-to-day permit processes. The Advance Planning team is charged with developing long range plans (e.g., General Plan and Land Use Plans) and recommending other policies and regulations that achieve HCD’s mission.

Staff trends in the former RMA and HCD were evaluated to understand if there is a correlation between

workload, resignations, morale, permitting backlog and permitting delays. Citygate Associates, LLC prepared a report entitled, *Review of the Resource Management Agency*, dated July 22, 2020, which recommended the dissolution of RMA. The Citygate report also called attention to the staffing and permit backlogs. Staff reviewed these findings again and has also compared current staffing levels with staffing levels previous to the Great Recession (FY 06-07) and those staffing levels when market conditions began to improve (FY 14-15). Staff has identified the need for additional staff to support the permit processes. A more detailed discussion related to staffing levels is found in **Attachment 1**.

Land use and construction permitting is, subject to, and is necessary to ensure compliance with a complexity of local and state policies and regulations. One may find these policies and regulations cumbersome, complex, and antiquated. HCD staff has been discussing internally various revisions to the policies and regulations, and other means to improve efficiencies in the permit process that could result in a reduction in permit backlogs and permitting delays. HCD staff is suggesting several near-term and long-term efficiency strategies, as detailed in **Attachment 1**. The Board of Supervisors should discuss and provide direction related to these streamlining efforts. Additionally, the Board should discuss and provide direction related to its permitting priorities. Currently, it is HCD's understanding that farmworker housing, 100% affordable housing projects, and cannabis projects take priority in processing.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA):

The County has determined that the proposed action (i.e., presentation and workshop) is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378). Because the proposed action will have no potential to cause any effect on the environment, or because it falls within a category of activities excluded as projects pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378, this matter is not a project. Because the matter does not cause a direct or foreseeable indirect physical change on or in the environment, this matter is not a project. Any subsequent action resulting from this discussion will be assessed for CEQA applicability.

FINANCE:

There is no financial impact resulting from receiving this report. However, the potential impacts, benefits, and costs to the County as a result of implementing streamlining measures, positions or other Board of Supervisor recommendations may be significant depending on the final implementation of all recommendations. Staff will be working closely with the CAO's Office on identifying resource needs and corresponding financing sources, during the development of the FY 2023/24 Recommended Budget.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

This presentation and workshop related to permitting is consistent with the Board of Supervisor's Administration Strategic Initiative by promoting an organization that practices efficient and effective resource management and is recognized for responsiveness, strong customer orientation, accountability and transparency.

- Economic Development
- Administration
- Health & Human Services
- Infrastructure
- Public Safety

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The following attachments are on file with the Clerk of the Board:

Attachment 1 - Detailed Discussion

Attachment 2 - Organizational Chart with proposed positions