

County of Santa Clara

Department of Planning and Development

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OFF-AGENDA MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 25, 2020

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM:  Jacqueline R. Onciano, Director, Dept. of Planning and Development

SUBJECT: Planning Clearance Applications

At the August 25, 2020 Board of Supervisors public hearing on adoption of a Planning Clearance Review Fee (Item No. 10), and at the request of Supervisor Cortese, the Board directed the Administration to collaborate with the Office of Vice President Wasserman and report to the Board on a date uncertain, clarifying language regarding the planning clearance application process and over-the-counter permit procedures.

This memorandum intends to update the Board on the Department's coordination with the Office of Vice President Wasserman subsequent to the August 25, 2020 Board meeting, relating to the Planning Clearance application. This memorandum also provides additional information concerning the Department's actions to streamline the planning screening review process referenced during the public hearing.

On August 25, 2020, the Board adopted a fee for a Planning Clearance Review, associated with a new application type proposed by the Department. In considering adoption of the Planning Clearance Review Fee, the Board discussed concerns regarding process delays associated with the planning clearance and associated permit application procedures. However, the process discussed did not relate to the Planning Clearance Review Fee, but instead to a new Application Review process implemented through the Permit Center as an initial step in receiving electronically transmitted development applications.

Following the Board meeting, the Director of the Department discussed these concerns with Vice President Wasserman and subsequently scheduled a meeting between Department staff and Vice President Wasserman and his staff for September 2, 2020. The September 2, 2020 meeting was subsequently canceled at the request of Vice

President Wasserman's Office, to allow opportunity for the district office to seek clarification regarding departmental processes.

PLANNING CLEARANCE

As described during the August 25, 2020 hearing, the Planning Clearance is a new application process that was recognized in Zoning Ordinance Amendments adopted by the Board on March 10, 2020. The Planning Clearance application provides a streamlined administrative review of defined land uses, such as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU), Junior ADUs, and Agricultural Employee housing.

The process delays discussed at the August 25, 2020 Board hearing relate to a separate, over-the-counter permit process referred to as the planning screening review or Application Review (AR) process. The planning screening review is used by the Department, without a fee, to review development applications (Building or Grading permits) prior to submittal, to ensure the proposed development does not require planning action (e.g., Land Use Entitlement, city annexation) that could cause delays in the permit review process.

Discussion at the August 25, 2020 hearing focused on delays in this planning screening review process, preventing applicants from submitting a building permit application in a timely fashion. Concurrently with receiving this feedback, the Department was implementing procedural changes to streamline the planning screening review or AR process. These changes include but are not limited to: implementation of a 24-hour timeline to complete the planning screening review once received, and institution of an assigned review time during public counter hours through video conferencing with the goal of facilitating staff collaboration to reach quick resolutions. The Department is monitoring these streamlining modifications in hopes of significantly reducing the overall planning screening review or AR process time, from over a week to an average of 24 hours.

Based on these process improvements, the Department is evaluating additional modifications incorporating video conferencing tools and other electronic processes to create better efficiencies under the COVID-19 Shelter-in-Place orders, to streamline the permit application and review process.

cc: Megan Doyle, bosagenda@cob.sccgov.org