

AGENDA

COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION/INFORMATION SYSTEMS

December 1, 2008
Aldermen O'Neil, Garrity,
Osborne, Pinard, Murphy

7:00 PM
Aldermanic Chambers
City Hall (3rd Floor)

1. Chairman O'Neil calls the meeting to order.
2. The Clerk calls the roll.
3. Communication from Pamela H. Goucher, Interim Planning Director, and Leon L. LaFreniere, Building Commissioner, regarding the potential merger of the Planning and Community Development Department and the Building Department.
(Note: Referred by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen on 11/12/08. Proposal previously forwarded to the Mayor and all Aldermen under separate cover.)
Ladies and Gentlemen, what is your pleasure?
4. There being no further business, a motion is in order to adjourn.



CITY OF MANCHESTER

One City Hall Plaza
Manchester, NH 03101

November 17, 2008

Chairman Dan O'Neil
Committee on Administration/Information Systems
Board of Mayor & Aldermen
City of Manchester
Manchester, NH 03101

Subject: Planning/Building Department Merger

Honorable Chair O'Neil:

As a result of action taken by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen on November 12, 2008, we are respectfully submitting the enclosed material regarding a proposed consolidation of the Planning & Community Development Department with the Building Department to the Committee on Administration/Information Systems.

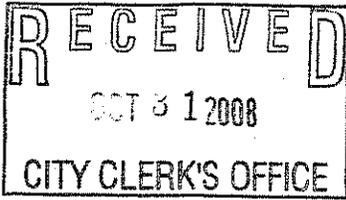
We will both be available to review the proposal with the Committee on Monday, November 24, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Leon L. LaFreniere, AICP
Building Regulations Director

Pamela H. Goucher, AICP
Interim Planning Director

attachments



CITY OF MANCHESTER
One City Hall Plaza
Manchester, New Hampshire 03101

October 31, 2008

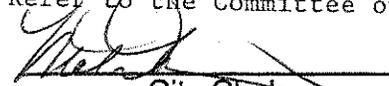
Honorable Board of Mayor & Aldermen
City of Manchester
One City Hall Plaza
Manchester, NH 03101

In board of Mayor and Aldermen

Date: 11/12/2008 On Motion of Ald. Murphy

Second by Ald. Garrity

Voted Refer to the Committee on Admin.


City Clerk

Subject: Planning/Building Department Merger

Honorable Board Members:

At the request and direction of the Board, we have been involved in discussions regarding the potential merger of the Planning and Community Development Department with the Building Department. After reviewing our department missions, our staff complement, our current responsibilities, and our budgets, we have developed a proposal that we believe creates an efficient, service oriented department.

While we would be available to provide additional information and answer questions at the BMA meeting of November 12, we would suggest that the Board refer the proposal to committee for a presentation. In this particular case, it may be appropriate to refer the matter to both the Committee on Human Resources and the Committee on Administration.

Respectfully submitted,



Leon L. LaFreniere, AICP
Building Regulations Director



Pamela H. Goucher, AICP
Interim Planning Director

Consolidation Proposal

Planning & Community Development Department
Building Department

Submitted by:

Leon L. LaFreniere
Building Regulations Director

Pamela H. Goucher
Interim Planning & Community Development Director

November 18, 2008

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Executive Summary

Proposed Merger of Planning & Community Development Department & Building Department

This proposal is submitted in response to a directive of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen to develop an organizational plan for a new department combining the functions of the existing Planning and Building Departments. Information was gathered from both internal and external customers of each department as part of the study process, as well as from other communities. Compatibility of the respective departmental missions, functions and responsibilities, as well as the potential benefits and negative consequences of consolidation were considered. While some nominal initial expenses would be incurred for minor building alterations to physically connect the two existing departments, to combine phone systems, to link computer equipment, and to provide new signage, it is anticipated that a consolidation of the two departments into one would offer the following benefits:

- Bring together two departments whose mission statements are similar and compatible;
- Further enhance customer service through improved communication;
- Improve efficiency of administrative support functions;
- Streamline site development review for applications to Planning & Zoning Boards;
- Streamline code enforcement by placing housing standards & zoning compliance under one supervisory unit;
- Combine the planning department staff oversight and expenditure of CDBG, HOME, ESG and LHRDG (Lead Paint) funds with staff inspection/compliance services of building department;
- Reduce & reorganize the staff complement and save City salaries/benefits;
- Significantly reduce paper files and storage needs;
- Achieve small, miscellaneous savings, over time, in operating costs by eliminating phone lines and coordinating office equipment and supplies;
- Increase staff moral by ending the speculation surrounding various merger initiatives that have been circulating over the past several years regarding both the Building Department as well as the Planning & Community Development Department.

If directed to proceed with the proposal as developed by the current Building Regulations Director and the Interim Planning Director, efforts will be focused on accomplishing the transition with a minimum of disruption to the two current departments, to customers and to the staff.

Consolidation Study – Planning & Building Departments 2008

Introduction

This report contains the results of a study of a proposal to consolidate the Planning & Community Development Department with the Building Department. The information contained herein is prepared in response to a directive of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, as voted at their meeting of October 7, 2008. While this directive formalized a timeframe to conduct such a study, the Director of the Building Department and the Interim Director of the Planning & Community Development Department had previously initiated preliminary discussions regarding such a merger.

These discussions came about in part as a result of Mayor Guinta's expressed desire to consolidate various functions of government in order to achieve maximum efficiency. Prior to the FY 2009 budget process, Mayor Guinta proposed a consolidation of the Building Department, Planning & Community Development Department and the Manchester Economic Development Office. While concerns have been raised about potential conflicts between the disparate missions and responsibilities of the city's regulatory and marketing departments, the proposal did however raise the prospect of consolidating the city's land use regulatory efforts.

We as public administrators, recognize our responsibility to investigate all opportunities for continued improvement, and to strive for implementation of measures available to improve the efficiency of government. This responsibility in the end became the goal.

Process

In an effort to take a comprehensive approach to this task, we defined a process that would assemble as much information as possible in the time available. Meetings were held with the Mayor, other department heads, and the staff of both the Planning Department and the Building Department to garner input. In addition, internal departmental staff surveys were conducted in an effort to gain as much input as possible from the people most critical to the success of any proposed change. We also conducted

targeted outreach efforts to outside developer interests in an effort to gain additional perspective.

Efforts were taken to review the various approaches to planning, community development, land use and building safety regulations utilized by similarly positioned communities in New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts. Information from Nashua, Concord and Keene, NH; Portland, ME; as well as Lowell and Worcester, MA was reviewed. This part of our investigation revealed that no singular model exists that would indicate an industry trend. Almost every community sampled utilizes a different approach to their organizational structure in these areas. While some communities take a combined approach, as many or more utilize a separate department structure. The combined approach seems more common in smaller communities with less staff resources.

As a result of reviewing the aforementioned information, the following tasks were defined:

- An analysis of each department's missions, areas of responsibility, strengths and weaknesses to determine compatibility;
- Identification of potential benefits;
- Identification of potential negative consequences/concerns;
- Identification of potential savings and costs of consolidation;
- Development of recommendations to the BMA.

Compatibility of Departmental Missions, Functions and Responsibilities

The Building Department is responsible for the administration of the city's construction codes, the Zoning Ordinance, minimum housing standards, permitting and the enforcement of the City's land use standards. The statutory authority to administer these areas of responsibility originates from City ordinances, as well as State and Federal laws and standards. The Department provides guidance to citizens and developers regarding development requirements. It also provides staff support to the Zoning Board of Adjustment and the Building Board of Appeals.

The Planning & Community Development Department develops and implements neighborhood and long-range planning efforts for the community. It oversees the City's growth management activities,

completes reviews of development proposals, and provides staff support to the Planning Board as well as several other Commissions/Committees. The Department, with recommendations from the Planning Board, initiates revisions to the Zoning Ordinance, and comments on rezoning requests, and determines compliance of such with the City's Master Plan. Planning staff has historically participated in facility planning of City buildings. Within the Planning Department is one of the City's leading GIS experts, who provides mapping services for Planning Department projects as well as for many other City departments. In addition to these responsibilities, the Planning and Community Development Department also prepares, administers, and monitors the City's Community Improvement Program, and provides direct staff support to the CIP Committee of the BMA.

While the functions and responsibilities of these two departments differ in specific application, they are however compatible and complementary in scope. The City's efforts to promote a healthy economic base, safe and livable environments, ensure an adequate supply of safe and affordable housing, as well as a high quality of life form the core of each department's mission.

A review of the Mission Statements of the Building and Planning Departments reveals that the primary common goals of each department focus on community quality of life issues, as well as the health and safety of our citizens.

Building Department Mission Statement:

The Building Department strives to provide the highest quality customer service in carrying out its functions as required by the administrative authority (Board of Mayor and Aldermen). These functions include the application of adopted regulatory codes and ordinances as they apply to the built environment, as well as various state and local land use rules and regulations.

Planning & Community Development Mission Statement:

The mission of the Planning & Community Development Department is to plan and manage the development of Manchester in a manner that insures a healthy economic base, safe and livable neighborhoods, a range of cultural opportunities and quality public facilities.

While current areas of responsibility differ in function and source of authority, we have determined that no conflicts exist either in goals or application.

Potential Benefits of Consolidation

The strength and success of each department rests primarily in its competent and dedicated workforce. The ability of staff to provide quality customer service and efficiently utilize available resources has allowed both departments to address customer service requirements in these challenging economic times. In the case of the Planning Department however, staff shortages resulting from retirements and position vacancies have severely hampered the ability to keep up with both demands for service and long range planning functions. The current staffing level within the Planning Department is approximately 60% of full complement, with 7.5 positions filled out of 12.

The principal benefits anticipated by a merger would be an improved customer experience and potential cost savings, as well as a more coordinated work approach of staff. The customer experience could be improved by an enhanced communication process. In the case of both departments, the most significant expense is salaries. A consolidated department would permit a more efficient utilization of staff resources through combining administrative support functions, as well as some field inspection responsibilities. The most significant cost savings would be realized by eliminating one department head level salary; however, other savings would be realized.

A significant portion of the CIP budget, as well as allocation of CIP staff time, is dedicated to programs designed to improve the housing stock and quality of life in the City's neighborhoods. Consolidation will allow for increased interaction with the Code Enforcement Division (as proposed) which will enhance the ability of staff to plan and allocate CIP resources in the most efficient and effective manner.

Concerns

Our internal staff surveys identified loss of focus on individual mission goals as a concern. A fear for loss of specific public identity for important city safety and quality of life programs was also identified. Outside developer interests indicated concerns about reductions in

service capacity if a merger resulted in fewer available resources and staff. In addition, concerns that significant building modifications would be necessary to fully integrate customer and staff functions were raised. Finally, a general concern regarding availability of adequate financial resources to maintain services was universally recognized.

Savings/Costs

The potential for savings in salary expenses result primarily from the fact that a single department head will be required where two currently exist. Also, additional savings can be realized by upgrading two planning positions that are currently contributing at levels above their current grade, and in turn, filling a vacancy at a lower level than called for by current complement.

Miscellaneous savings in operating expenses are anticipated if certain functions are combined, such as potentially reducing the number of phone lines, eliminating the need for redundant office equipment, etc.

The current Building Department staff complement stands at twenty (20), with one (1) grant funded position vacancy. The current Planning & Community Development Department complement stands at twelve (12), with four and one-half (4 ½) full time equivalent position vacancies and one (1) grant funded position vacancy. The total complement for the two departments currently stands at thirty four (34), including limited term, grant funded positions. It is our belief that a reorganized department can maintain services to the public with a total of thirty two (32) positions, *as long as the staff complement is approved as proposed in the organizational chart.*

For purposes of this study it has been assumed that implementation of the consolidation would take place on January 1, 2009. Anticipated savings from the FY 2009 general fund appropriations would be approximately \$44,200 within this fiscal year. Since these savings would carry forward, it is anticipated that a combined department would save approximately \$112,000 in FY 2010. *These savings projections assume that the adjusted combined complement is fully funded and staffed as proposed.*

In order to combine the two departments into a single working unit, some costs will be incurred to address required building and systems modifications. Following discussions with the Public Works Department,

the Information Systems Department and the city's security manager, the following preliminary estimates have been identified:

- \$3,000 - Building modifications to physically connect the two departments;
- \$1,500 - Equipment necessary to combine two existing phone systems;
- \$2,800 - Modifications to existing security system;
- \$ 350 - Printing and graphics;
- \$ 500 - Signage; and
- \$ 250 - Miscellaneous fittings to adjust modular office systems.
- \$8,400 - Total

Conclusions/Recommendations

The administration of the current Building Department and the Planning & Community Development Department, believe that a consolidation will yield benefits to the community in the form of improved service delivery and cost savings. This study concludes that a consolidation of the two departments will not create conflicts between individual department responsibilities; rather it will enhance specific departmental functions. In addition, it will also present an opportunity to reduce resource demands while maintaining services.

Improved customer experience, a potential for more efficient utilization of administrative support resources, the ability to integrate and coordinate the development review process, the ability to coordinate construction field inspections, the ability to have CIP staff have a more direct link to the Housing Certificate of Compliance program are all envisioned as benefits of consolidation. Potential savings may be realized in areas including: salary expenses, telephone charges, and in the replacement costs and lease expenses associated with redundant office equipment. An additional benefit would result from the ability to maintain separation of accounting functions in accord with internal auditor's recommendations. This is a challenge currently within each of the departments due to limited administrative staff resources.

We believe that an improved customer experience will result from the consolidation of development review and code enforcement functions.

The current development review process requires a coordinated effort of the two departments to insure uniform application of development standards. By combining the planning review functions relating to development with the zoning review functions, customers will enjoy the benefit of a unified review process.

A major emphasis of the Building Department's current code enforcement efforts rests in the areas of housing standards and zoning compliance. By combining these efforts under a single supervisory unit, the department will have the ability to apply improved coordination and unity in our efforts to achieve compliant properties.

The following steps will be required should the BMA recommend proceeding with implementation:

- Adoption of required changes to Code of Ordinances that currently reference separate departments;
- Adoption of amended Class Specifications;
- Adoption of required changes to the Zoning Ordinance where referring to separate departmental responsibility; and
- Identification of funds necessary to execute required building modifications.

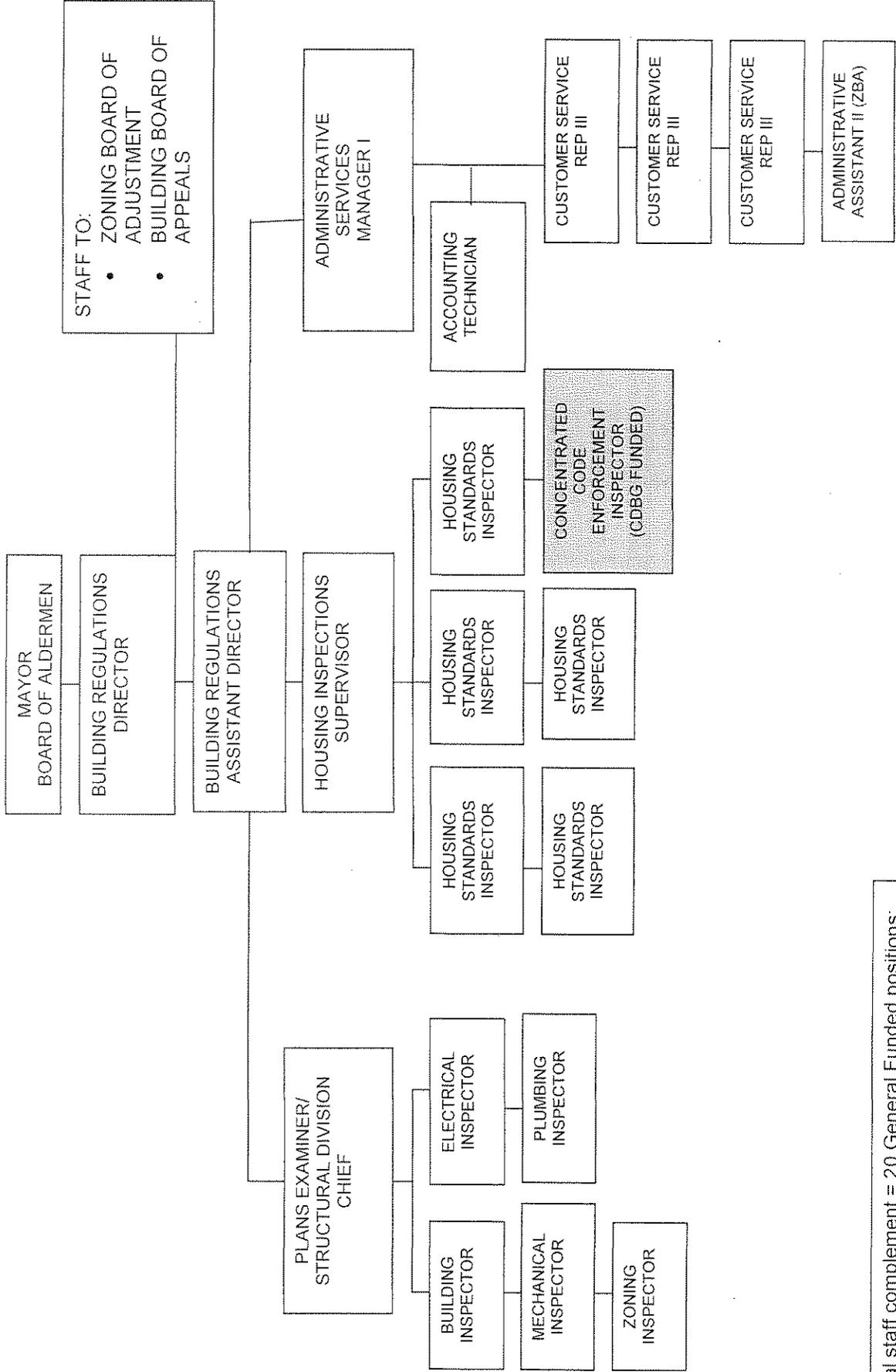
Attached to this report, in the appendix, are copies of the following documents:

- A draft organizational chart for the proposed consolidated department;
- Existing organizational chart for the Building Department; and
- Existing organizational chart for the Planning & Community Development Department.

In conclusion, we trust that the information provided demonstrates the advantages of a departmental merger and, as proposed, has the support of both the Building Regulations Director and the Interim Planning Director.

Appendix

EXISTING BUILDING DEPARTMENT COMPLEMENT



Total staff complement = 20 General Funded positions;
1 grant funded, limited term.

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