

KIMBALL REPORT IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

***Mayor James L. Richetelli, Jr. to
Economic Development Commission
February 24, 2010***

What personnel changes have occurred since the Department of Permitting & Land Use (DPLU) was created in October 2009? Since the Board of Aldermen unanimously authorized the creation of the DPLU, several candidates were interviewed for the Interim Director position. To fill the position, Douglas Novak was hired in November 2009 for an anticipated term of six months. Mr. Novak joined DPLU following a 33-year career with the state Department of Transportation, and considerable knowledge of the land use permitting system from his service on the Kimball Report Implementation Team (KRIT).

Have there been other personnel changes? With the election in November of former ZEO Linda Stock to the position of City Clerk, the ZEO position became vacant. As has been the City's practice for decades, and in accordance with the job description of the Assistant City Planner, Emmeline Harrigan is performing the responsibilities of the ZEO. A new ZEO will be appointed after the new fiscal year begins on July 1. Until then, the ZEO salary is being utilized to pay Mr. Novak.

How was the Interim Director's salary determined? The salary for the DPLU Interim Director reflects the value of substantial managerial experience in the government sector; a proven track record of effectively managing a sizable professional and clerical staff; an understanding of union issues and concerns; a demonstrated commitment to put in the hours necessary to accomplish stated goals; and proven communication skills in resolving difficult situations; among other factors. The temporary salary is commensurate with those of current City department heads.

Does Mr. Novak's previous service on the KRIT pose a potential conflict of interest? Mr. Novak's knowledge of the permitting process, his familiarity with the affected City personnel, and the time he devoted to this endeavor actually are all assets in serving as Interim Director.

Was the position of Interim Director advertised or posted? The position, which is a mayoral appointment, was not posted. There is no requirement in the City Charter or in civil service regulations to post this type of appointment. Because of media coverage prior to the creation of the DPLU, there was considerable interest generated from potential candidates, who contacted us.

Is a search underway for a permanent director? A search will begin soon. We have retained resumes and contact information for people who have expressed an interest, or whose representative has expressed an interest on his or her behalf.

To whom does Mr. Novak report? Mr. Novak reports to the Mayor, as required by Ordinance passed unanimously by the Board of Aldermen on October 5, 2009.

What does Mr. Novak do on a daily basis? Since he was appointed, Mr. Novak has worked diligently to learn how the daily operations of the divisions under his supervision – Building, Planning & Zoning, and Inland Wetlands – contribute to or create barriers within the land use permitting process. Among the day-to-day reforms he has instituted are:

- Requiring employees to inform him and the public in advance when their offices hours will be altered;
- Daily reporting of permits under review by the Building Division;
- Requiring that re-submissions of reviewed Building Division plans are not forced to return to the “bottom of the list”;
- Encouraging face-to-face communication with permit applicants who are confused about what is required, or who need a more detailed explanation of why their applications were rejected;
- Suspending City cell phones in DPLU divisions where they are not being used;
- Improving efficiency by enforcing pre-existing work conditions, including designated and predictable lunch hours and time-off to ensure adequate staffing at all times;
- Working with division heads to more efficiently manage and prioritize projects, thus virtually eliminating overtime expense;
- Engaging in personal conversation and sitting with people waiting for Building Division service to determine if their issue can be speedily resolved.
- Improving accountability of division managers.

What has been the City staff reaction to these changes? We have included union representation every step of the way in implementing the changes to date. Most City staff in the affected departments has reacted favorably to the changes. Some, however, seem to feel threatened by these changes and are reacting less positively. Mr. Novak continues to address these issues on a daily basis.

Why hasn't a Customer Service Representative been hired yet? It was deemed more important to get an Interim Director on board with authority to immediately implement the process changes, before hiring the Customer Service Representative to shepherd applicants through the process. Since the Customer Service Representative will be selected from existing staff, it is necessary to assess the skills of current staff, dialogue with them to determine their interests, and work with union representatives throughout the process. All personnel changes will be in place at or before the start of the new fiscal year on July 1.

What is happening with the plan to convert Conference Room A into the new DPLU office? Plans to convert Conference Room A are moving along. Before starting work on the existing Conference Room A, it was necessary to convert office space on the second floor of Parsons (formerly the Employment & Training Office – elevator accessible) into a *new* Conference Room A. This has been completed. Quotations for the work on the new DPLU offices were requested, and three firms responded. The low bidder was Ray Oliver, who also served on the KRIT. The Mayor is awaiting Mr. Oliver's return from vacation at the end of the month to discuss several issues. No work has been awarded to date. It is important to proceed properly through the RFQ phase. Funding has been approved by the Board of Aldermen to utilize state LOCIP grant funds.

How much will the KRIT implementation cost the City? As envisioned by KRIT, this implementation was to be cost neutral – meaning that the costs incurred would be offset by money saved. However, the Board of Aldermen last year voted to restore the Assistant City Planner position that KRIT had recommended eliminating. Because of that action, the implementation plan can no longer be cost neutral. However, we are committed to keeping costs as low as possible.

What has been the feedback from the public on the KRIT implementation? The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. The Mayor's Office – previously the recipient of countless complaints about the permitting process – has received numerous letters and telephone calls of thank you for a process improved. There are letters attached to this update to illustrate the kind of feedback being received in City Hall and in DPLU.

What about the Planning & Zoning Board? Mr. Novak received an invitation from the P & Z Board chairwoman to discuss with the Board the role of the DPLU. In that same letter, the chairwoman noted that members of the Board had contacted Mr. Novak with constituent concerns or questions, which he has been able to efficiently resolve.

Does Mr. Novak have authority over the P & Z Board, or the Inland Wetlands Agency? No. These boards have statutory and charter responsibilities. The DPLU Director is responsible for administrative functions only and not land use decisions.

Does the P & Z Board have authority over DPLU, or over the Planning & Zoning Division? According to Ordinance, the P & Z Board has no authority over the administrative functions of the DPLU. The DPLU Interim Director reports directly to the Mayor. Regarding the second part of the question – whether or not the P & Z Board has authority over the Planning and Zoning Division – there seems to be some confusion. The Mayor actually has administrative responsibilities for the Planning and Zoning Division, as set forth by City Ordinance of 3-3-2003 and, by the superceding ordinance of 10-5-2009, the Director of DPLU assumes those administrative responsibilities on behalf of the Mayor. As a side note, the Planning and Zoning Division is responsible to assist the P & Z Board in carrying out all planning and zoning functions set forth in State and local regulations, and in the Connecticut General Statutes.

What has DPLU accomplished since its inception? Director Novak reports making the following improvements, among others, since November 2009:

- All DPLU divisions now work the same work schedule, from 8:00 am – 4:30 p.m.
- Building Division inspectors have drastically reduced wait time for inspections by following the new directive to use cell phones to call customers prior to inspections. The previous four-hour window for inspections has been reduced to less than one hour, depending upon the scope of inspection.
- Instituted extended hours in the Building Division on Wednesdays to 7:00 p.m.

- Formulated new policy to insure that temporary Certificates of Occupancy can be issued when the acting Chief Building Official is absent or unavailable. This policy to enable the issuance of temporary CO's until a permanent CO can be issued was formulated in consultation with the Office of the State Building Official.
- To improve applicants' access to resource material, the Director sought a legal opinion on copyright issues, under which Building Division employees now may furnish applicants with copies of codebook references.
- Instituted a requirement for division employees to respond to questions from constituents within a reasonable time frame. Absent exigent circumstances, employees are requested to return all phone calls within 24 hours.
- Directed Building Division plan reviewers to interact with the Planning & Zoning Division in obtaining approvals for applicants. Requested documentation of Planning & Zoning Division pending work to track progress.
- Designed a system to accurately track the individual training records for each Building Division inspector, thus enabling employees to take maximum advantage of training toward required certifications.
- Required staff to be accountable to Director for all leave time.
- Compensatory time is now reported to the Director. Director keeps track of accrued and used time, and generates a weekly time sheet report to track hours worked by each employee.
- Within the terms of existing union contracts and civil service regulations, Director is working to institute a structured lunch hour. This is expected to rectify a staffing issue whereby employees have asked for early release or overtime pay in lieu of taking a lunch.
- Generated monthly overtime reports, analyzed expenditures, prioritized work projects, and drastically reduced the number of overtime hours paid.

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- Devised a yearly calendar to track all employees' leave of absence (vacation, sick, floating holiday, personal business, bereavement, workmen compensation).
- After examining Building Division workload and manpower needs, enlisted the temporary assistance of a retired inspector to perform plan reviews and to speed up process (paid for out of seasonal account).
- Reduced the total monthly cell phone bill in the three divisions by combining them into one bill, saving the City approximately \$55-\$60 per month. Placed four cell phones on suspension, due to little or no usage.
- Consulted with both the Police and Fire Departments for input on ways to expedite the permit process.
- In conjunction with staff and Personnel Director, revised ZEO job description. Interviewed candidate for position.
- Identified the issue of sign permits as one needing clarification, and worked with the Office of the State Building Official to more effectively communicate who needs what type of license and when.
- Worked with Finance Department to dispose of copies of decades old financial records generated by the Building Division.
- Working with City Management Information Systems (MIS) toward implementing computer programs to allow the public to submit applications on-line. In a related effort, Director is working on initiative to allow staff to utilize programs that will eliminate many of the duplicated paper files.
- Working with MIS to create electronic forms, thus eliminating forms being completed on the typewriter.
- Created a web page for Department of Permitting and Land Use, which has been submitted to MIS for posting on the City website.

- Discussed with Employment & Training Department the inclusion of DPLU in the summer Youth Program.
- Facilitated the installation of Internet access on counter computer in the Building Division for inspectors' use.
- To improve applicants' access to the most current information, placed building and trade-related periodicals at the counter of Building Division.
- Redesigned the permit review form, incorporating the simple addition of the applicant's name and telephone number to make communication easier and more efficient.
- In consultation with City Risk Manager, developed new policy that contractors are not required to name the City of Milford as an additional insured on workmen compensation insurance.
- Resubmissions are turned around faster due to the procedural change and reporting sheet.
- Intervened on many complaints to resolve issues (see attached testimonials). This includes resolving a four-year-old sidewalk issue at 1750 Boston Post Road (Lazy Boy Furniture).
- Worked with Planning & Zoning Division staff to remove outdated office equipment and paper files, and improve office safety.
- Purchased lock box in Building Division for receivables. However, as of March 1, the Building Division will only accept checks. Ensured that duplicate vehicle keys are available to staff in emergency situations.
- Corrected safety issue in the Building Division that had resulted in a worker injury.
- Initiated process to advertise for Building Division Inspector position that will be vacant on 3/12/10.