

MIAMI BEACH

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee Members

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: January 29, 2025

TITLE: DISCUSS THE “FROM THE GET-GO” INITIATIVE THAT AIMS TO OVERHAUL THE BUILDING PERMIT REVIEW PROCESS BY ENSURING THAT ALL NECESSARY ITEMS ARE IDENTIFIED DURING THE INITIAL SUBMISSION AND REVIEW

RECOMMENDATION

Continue streamlining and simplifying the process as much as possible and educate the public and stakeholders on the steps and processes that must be done to comply with building codes and the City’s local ordinances.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

This item was originally a referral from Mayor Meiner at the July 24, 2024 Commission Meeting (item C4 Q) to discuss an initiative coined “From the Get-Go” that aims to overhaul the building permit review process by ensuring that ALL necessary items are identified during the initial submission and review. The purpose of this initiative was to seek to enhance efficiency, accountability, and clarity, ensuring that the permit process is expedient and predictable for applicants.

The item was discussed, and a presentation from staff made at the November 13, 2024 PSNQLC meeting, with a request from the Committee to return in January with an update summarized in the Conclusion section

ANALYSIS

Applicants who apply for a building permit are required to submit the appropriate construction documentation for the scope of work being proposed for review by the municipality. Documents submitted for review go through two layers of review. The first layer of the review is a general review conducted by the permit clerks to verify that general requirements applicable to any submission is met. This includes ensuring that a complete and signed notarized permit application by the property owner has been submitted and that plans and specifications are being submitted and have been signed and sealed as required by state law. Once the permit clerks validate this, the second layer can begin.

The second layer is the technical plan review and focuses on the specific legal requirements applicable to the scope of work. This is done by the plan reviewers of each review department; Building Department, Planning & Zoning Department, Fire Department, Public Works, Environmental & Sustainability, and Parking Department. On the first review the reviewers analyze the scope of work and the documents submitted and do a comprehensive review with the available documentation. Upon completion of the first review the reviewers provide any corrections needed that pertain to the documents submitted, and/or will request that additional documentation be submitted. It should be noted that despite the guidelines established to outline all required documents and information for initial submissions and the specific and comprehensive checklist posted on the City’s website and provided to applicants upon submission of an initial

application, to ensure all necessary items are included in their application package, applicants often do not provide complete and detailed submissions from the outset. Therefore, the first review often results in a failed review because of incomplete submissions. Upon submission of previously omitted documents, during the second review there may be new/additional comments because of the newly submitted documents. Assuming that this second submission is a complete submission, the applicant will have all necessary corrections needed to complete the review.

At the current time approximately 69% of permits issued go through 1-2 review cycles. 31% of permits issued having 3 or more review cycles. The City of Miami Beach requires that a three-time review meeting takes place between the City reviewers, property owner, and design professionals whenever a review has failed three times. At this meeting any remaining comments / corrections are discussed to ensure clarity and compliance at the fourth submission.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Under Review

Does this Ordinance require a Business Impact Estimate? (FOR ORDINANCES ONLY)

The Business Impact Estimate (BIE) was published on .

See BIE at: <https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/city-hall/city-clerk/meeting-notice/>

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

N/A

CONCLUSION

Since July 2024 the Administration with the assistance of Moran Consulting and with recommendations from the Permitting Process Improvement Ad Hoc Committee (Ad Hoc Committee), embarked on a mission to significantly improve the permitting review process “From the Get-Go” and beyond, thereby enhancing the customer experience for all stakeholders who participate in the process.

This path to improvement also entailed many hours of focus and engagement from various internal groups resulting in several accomplishments to date, not the least of which are:

- Comprehensive assessment of the permitting customer’s needs,
- Fundamental customer service training for all staff of 6 permitting city departments,
- Process improvement teams who identified root causes of problems and recommended solutions,
- Implementation of recommendations that have resulted in a 30% reduction in call volume to the call center (indicating 30% fewer problems for customers),
- Segmented certain permit types to speed up the process to include – Over the Counter (OTC), i.e., same day, and “Fast Permits”, i.e., with a 5-day review time,
- Established and implemented formal “Standards of Service” for each role impacting the customer’s experience with permitting,
- Established metrics to indicate review cycles and review times showing measured improvements,
- Updated permitting “Frequently Asked Questions” and responses on-line,
- Established internal communication tool – directory or “Who Does What” for 6 permitting departments enhancing communication and access to solve problems.
- Hiring of a new Building Director and other key staff within the Department,

- Promoting a Customer Service Manager to become the point person to assist with resolving customer complaints and provide guidance to help customers complete their process,
- Hiring of a Permitting Coordinator reporting to the Neighborhood Affairs Division and working closely with the Building Customer Service Manager,
- Completed assessment of permitting related software and technology with recommendations for improvement,
- Relocation of knowledgeable staff to front counter from customer service and violations expediting problem solving and service delivery.
- Installed computers in lobby area for customers to easily access accounts as well as “How To” videos on TV monitors.
- Enabled direct communication for the customer to the inspector bypassing the call center – saving the customer time and frustration.
- Specialized trainings for each role in the permitting process implementing the new role-specific standards of service. (Intake, Review, Call Center, Inspectors, Records, Finals, Violations)
- Filling of open staff positions as well as department restructuring to meet the needs of the community.
- Policy modifications to include Planning plan review not required for re-submittal after passing.
- Policy group remains in place representing all 6 permitting departments with a focus on streamlining processes and enhancing the customer experience.

More needs to be done in 2025 to take the permitting process to a higher level of success. On Tuesday, January 14, 2024, the Ad Hoc Committee made a motion to sunset their committee and allow the Administration to focus 100% of their efforts on the implementation of additional improvements that have been discussed at the Ad Hoc Committee since its inception. This includes the following initiatives which are in various stages of development:

- Return of a “Walk-through” permit process i.e., in person (Phase 1 pilot close to commencement),
- Comprehensive communication plan to assist in simplifying the process for the public (brochures, video, one-pager hand out material, on-line information improvements – all close to completion and launch),
- Implementing information regarding the Certificate of Use (CU) and Business Tax Receipt (BTR) requirements early in the permit application process for businesses (In process)
- Continue measuring improvements based on time and customer experience (customer satisfaction, cycle time, call volume – ongoing)
- Consider implementing a ticketing process to streamline communication and problem solving for customers (under review),
- Implement “Decision Engine” technology to streamline the permitting process “From the Get-Go” (in process),
- Re-assessment and re-structuring of all permit types streamlining the process, removing redundancies, and simplifying the system for customers and staff.
- Implement recommendations from Tyler Technologies and Energov assessments, and make other technology improvements (in process),
- Implement interdepartmental policy changes which speed up permitting (in process),
- Evaluate interdepartmental staffing needs to meet the desired levels of service to the customer (future change),
- Create a more welcoming environment in the building department lobby (future change).

Applicable Area

Citywide

**Is this a “Residents Right to Know” item,
pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?**

No

**Is this item related to a G.O. Bond
Project?** No

**Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481,
includes a principal engaged in lobbying?** No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s):

Department

Building

Sponsor(s)

Mayor Steven Meiner

Co-sponsor(s)

Condensed Title

DISCUSS THE “FROM THE GET-GO” INITIATIVE FOR BUILDING PERMIT REVIEW.