

14. DISCUSS THE POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF A TEXT MESSAGING SYSTEM TO FACILITATE THE REPORTING OF CODE COMPLIANCE COMPLAINTS
Applicable Area:

MIAMI BEACH

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee Members

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: November 6, 2024

TITLE: DISCUSS THE POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF A TEXT MESSAGING SYSTEM TO FACILITATE THE REPORTING OF CODE COMPLIANCE COMPLAINTS

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration will continue to evaluate the feasibility of implementing a texting solution for Code Compliance complaints which will ensure that complaints can be imported into a central repository for effective tracking and assignment. The Information Technology and Code Compliance Departments will develop and test an internal pilot program as they await completion of a short code registration that will provide an easy to remember texting option.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

At the April 3, 2024 Commission meeting, at the request of Commissioner Alex Fernandez and co-sponsor Commissioner Joseph Magazine, the Mayor and City Commission approved a referral (Item C4 T) to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee (PSNQLC) to discuss the potential implementation of a text messaging system to facilitate the reporting of Code Compliance complaints in order to accelerate the ability for issues to be promptly reported and addressed.

The referral requested that the City Administration be prepared at Committee to discuss available options for implementing a text messaging system to provide residents and other concerned persons with the ability to immediately report concerns to Code Compliance. The referral also requested that the City Administration, upon consideration of all relevant factors (including, but not limited to, feasibility, cost, and effectiveness), provide the Committee with its recommendations regarding various options, along with any specific issues or concerns relating to this initiative.

The item was deferred at the July 10, 2024 PSNQLC meeting at the request of the sponsor and subsequently heard at the PSNQLC on September 18, 2024.

ANALYSIS

The Code Compliance Department has established multiple avenues for receiving complaints, as discussed during the Commission Meeting on May 15, 2024 (agenda item R9 R). The formal process for residents to report Code Compliance complaints to the City involves contacting the Code Compliance Department through various channels, such as by calling Code Compliance's direct number at (305) 673-7555, using the Miami Beach Gov app, or reaching dispatch after business hours at (305) 604-CITY. The City's telephone system and interactive voice response system allows residents to speak to the Code Compliance Department directly during regular business hours, or to the dispatch center after hours. These teams can appropriately route requests and request Police resources as needed.

On November 28, 2023, the Information Technology Department launched a revitalized and modern version of the City's Miami Beach Gov app (previously eGov). The release provided several enhancements and compatibility features and remains the most effective way to digitally report code compliance complaints. Using technology, Code-related items are routed directly to the Code Compliance Department where the appropriate staff can respond. The Code Compliance Department uses the city's licensing, permitting, and inspection enterprise resource planning (ERP) system to manage and enforce incidents. This system does not allow for text messages to be automatically inserted as new cases and would require staff to manually input any text messages that are sent in.

On September 4, 2024, the Information Technology Department introduced enhanced capabilities into the City's capabilities into the City's IVR system that provides a more streamlined method to reach City departments and staff. This functionality will allow residents to speak to the system and bypass the menu to reach City resources more quickly. This system was first piloted during the summer of 2024 and has shown a success rate of 92%.

The Information Technology Department has already taken significant steps toward developing a text messaging system by requesting and registering numbers with the carriers, ensuring compliance with legal requirements, and developing sample workflows. Once services become available, IT will continue to ensure integration with our current systems and will be able to begin testing a proof of concept. Since the cost structure will be based on usage, costs are expected to be nominal and depending on the type of message, will cost a fraction of a cent per message.

IT is developing a bot that will be used to communicate with our residents over text message and will begin testing an internal pilot program to gauge its effectiveness. Once a resident texts the service and authorizes communication over text, the bot will chat with the customer and request additional information where needed. The IT department expects that this information will then be added to a call center case that can be routed, but final design and workflow details may change as a result of testing and feedback.

While there are many components that are not within the control of the City and will take time, IT is looking to develop a comprehensive solution that will require more time to assess and test. By building out this capability, the City will have additional tools available in the future, enabling broader applications across various departments to enhance communication and response efforts. This approach will allow us to efficiently integrate text message reporting into our existing processes without placing an additional manual burden on staff.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

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-notices/>

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

N/A

CONCLUSION

Staff will be present to discuss current request volumes and provide any information on the potential implementation of a text messaging system to facilitate the reporting of Code Compliance complaints.

Applicable Area

Citywide

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

Yes

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

Code Compliance

Sponsor(s)

Commissioner Alex Fernandez

Co-sponsor(s)

Commissioner Joseph Magazine

Condensed Title

Potential Implementation of a Text Messaging System for Reporting Code Compliance Complaints

MIAMI BEACH

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission
FROM: Commissioner Alex Fernandez
DATE: April 3, 2024

SUBJECT: REFERRAL TO THE PUBLIC SAFETY AND NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY OF LIFE COMMITTEE
TO DISCUSS THE POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF A TEXT MESSAGING SYSTEM TO
FACILITATE THE REPORTING OF CODE COMPLIANCE COMPLAINTS.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

Was 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 name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s): N/A

ANALYSIS

Please place on the April 3, 2024 agenda a referral to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee to discuss the potential implementation of a text messaging system to facilitate the reporting of Code Compliance complaints in order to accelerate the ability for these issues to be promptly reported and addressed.

As a densely populated urban area that hosts thousands of visitors each day, the City must often respond quickly to Code Compliance complaints regarding various matters ranging from excessive noise to sanitation issues and short-term rentals. In order to facilitate the ability for these important quality of life issues to be promptly reported and remediated by City Staff, I would like to explore the possibility of implementing a text messaging system (i.e., WhatsApp) that any person with a cellphone could quickly and easily utilize to report an observable Code Compliance complaint.

Accordingly, I would request that the City Administration be prepared at Committee to discuss the available options for implementing a text messaging system to provide residents and other concerned persons with the ability to immediately report observed Code Compliance complaints. I would further request that the City Administration, upon consideration of all relevant factors (including, but not limited to, feasibility, cost and effectiveness), provide the Committee with its recommendations regarding the various options, along with any specific issues or concerns relating to this initiative.

SUPPORTING SURVEY DATA

N/A

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The Fiscal Impact to be determined at Committee.

Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-14?

No

Does this item utilize G.O. Bond Funds?

No

Legislative Tracking

Commissioner Alex Fernandez

Sponsor

Co-sponsored by Commissioner Joseph Magazine