

Memorandum

Date: November 18, 2020

To: All Plan Review Customers

From: Dawn B. Crim, Secretary-designee

RE: Plan Review Process Improvement Update and Platform Changes

As you likely have noticed, over the course of 2020 we have implemented several changes to improve service for our plan review customers. We have had very good results, and I wanted to give you a status update on that effort. I also wanted to make sure you were aware of another change coming in the spring of 2021: We are migrating our submissions to a new online platform as part of an agency-wide technology modernization project that has been underway for several years. You will need to learn a new submission process, and you will no longer be able to use our old system.

Plan Review Process If you have worked with us in 2020, you know that we have taken a deep dive into our plan review process and have piloted some changes. Our goals for this effort have been to improve organizational efficiency, reduce customer wait time, and level expectations and experiences for all customers—all without compromising safety.

I am happy to report that plumbing plans are now reviewed and returned within three weeks. Commercial building plans are back to customers within five weeks. Because our piloted changes have been successful, we are making them permanent.

Starting on January 15, 2021, we will process plan reviews only once submissions are complete. Plan submissions are considered complete once all materials are submitted and department staff has determined that they are ready for review. We will then add the plans to the queue, and we will give customers a date to expect a decision. If our team determines that plans are not complete, we will work with customers to resolve any deficiencies. Those plans will enter the queue once DSPS staff determine they are complete and ready for review.

We understand that managing timelines is critical to your work. This system enables us to ensure that, regardless of the season, we can return decisions within six weeks or less from the date we receive complete plans. This is largely how we have been operating our plan review process for most of 2020, so it should be familiar to those of you who have submitted plans this year. For those of you who have not worked with us recently, please be aware that we have enhanced checklists and trained staff to help customers become acclimated to our process.

While these internal improvements were needed and are effective, I want you to know that there is more that we are doing to ensure that we are in the best position to serve our customers. For example, we are working with code councils to evaluate current review thresholds, we continue to add municipal partners as delegated agents to handle local plan review services, and we are advocating for legislative changes that would give the department greater flexibility to implement additional changes that would further enhance efficiency and improve customer service.

Platform Conversion I also wanted to make sure you are aware of a significant change ahead for our plan review customers. We are transitioning from our current submission platform (Regulated Objects) to a new platform (eSLA).

For the past several years, the department has been migrating most functions from multiple legacy platforms to eSLA. The technology modernization will merge several agency databases into one for more efficient and optimal operation. Customers will have a single point of entry for agency services, and the new platform will allow them to personalize dashboards and provide self-service options for applications, requests, and account management. The new platform will feature a modern, mobile-responsive interface and user experience.

Other benefits include updated payment processing and greater automation that eliminates manual data entry and frees staff to focus on more complex tasks and customer service. These overall improvements will be great progress for our agency, but we understand that this change will require customers to update accounts and learn a new submission process. We are currently developing several tutorials to assist our customers switch from Regulated Objects to eSLA. Please watch for future communications about this conversion and customer support tools.

We appreciate your cooperation and collaboration as we implement these changes and other steps to better serve our customers. We know there is always a learning curve with change, and we will continue to add support tools and resources as we identify needs. Our staff is ready to assist you so that your projects stay on track.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dawn B. Cur". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.