

TOWN OF WOODSIDE

TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA
Independence Hall, 2955 Woodside Road, Woodside

November 7, 2005
7:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tonight's meeting will be adjourned in fond memory of Joan Miller Stiff, retired Town Councilmember and Mayor.

COMMUNICATIONS

Persons wishing to address the Council on any matter not on the posted agenda are invited to do so. Please note, however, that the Council is not able to undertake extended discussion or to act on non-agendized items. Such items can be referred to staff for appropriate action, which may include placement on a future agenda. This communication period is limited to five persons, three minutes each. Any additional persons wishing to be heard will be scheduled at the end of Regular Business.

CONSENT CALENDAR

All items on the Consent Calendar are considered to be routine and will be approved by one roll call motion unless a request is made at the beginning of the meeting that an item be withdrawn or transferred to the regular agenda.

1. Monthly Financial Report for October, 2005. **(Provides a status report on the Town's finances as of October 31, 2005.)**
2. Monthly Investment Report for the Month of October, 2005. **(Provides the Council a monthly statement of interest income, pursuant to State law.)**
3. Resolution Granting an Extension of the Cable Television Franchise Agreement with Comcast of California IX, Inc., to February 28, 2006 and Authorizing the Town Manager to Retain the Services of a Consultant to Assist with the Franchise Renewal Negotiations. Resolution No. 2005 - _____ **(The current agreement will be extended from November 13, 2005 to February 28, 2006, to facilitate joint negotiations with Portola Valley and will authorize the Town Manager to retain the services of the same consultant that Portola Valley has hired.)**

NEW BUSINESS

4. Discussion and Approval of Approach to be Utilized to Solicit and Address the Public's Concerns with Aspects of the Town's Building Process and their Suggestions for Improvements to the Process. **(The Town Manager will outline a process for soliciting input from the Town's residents and their hired building-related professionals and to incorporate it into the implementation of an existing improvement plan.)**

REPORTS

5. Mayor and Councilmember Communications.

COMMUNICATIONS

ADJOURNMENT

IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITY ACT, IF YOU NEED SPECIAL ASSISTANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS MEETING, PLEASE CONTACT THE TOWN CLERK AT (650) 851-6790. NOTIFICATION IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING WILL ENABLE THE TOWN TO MAKE REASONABLE ARRANGEMENTS TO ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY TO THIS MEETING.

TOWN OF WOODSIDE

Report to Town Council
From: Susan George, Town Manager

Agenda Item 4
November 7, 2005

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF APPROACH TO BE UTILIZED TO SOLICIT AND ADDRESS THE PUBLIC'S CONCERNS WITH ASPECTS OF THE TOWN'S BUILDING PROCESS AND THEIR SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PROCESS

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Town Council accept public input on this report and approve the proposed approach to be utilized to solicit and address the public's concerns with aspects of the Town's building process and their suggestions for improvements to the process.

BACKGROUND

On October 25, 2005, the Town Council received a status report (**Attachment A**) from the Town Manager on the implementation of the sixteen recommendations that were included in a report prepared by Management Partners, Inc., a management consulting firm engaged to evaluate the Town's Engineering Department and its role in the development review process. Following the presentation of the status report, several members of the audience voiced their frustration with the building process and provided examples of experiences that led to their frustration. Following the public's comments, Councilmember Sinclair shared a recounting of his personal experiences with the Town's building process. At the conclusion of the Town Council's discussions, it was suggested that a committee be formed for purposes of soliciting additional input from the Town's residents and their various building professionals. This additional input would augment the work done by Management Partners and would lead to additional recommendations for changes to the process. Different approaches to this were offered by two Councilmembers. The Council ultimately accepted the Town Manager's suggestion that she take the Council's and the public's comments under submission and develop a recommended approach for accomplishing the objective of reaching out to solicit both the complaints and the suggested improvements to the process that Town residents may wish to offer. Because of the Council's limited meeting schedule for the balance of the calendar year, a special meeting was set for purposes of hearing the Town Manager's recommendations.

DISCUSSION

As the Town Manager, I accept the complete responsibility for the Town staff's efforts and have made the improvement of the Town's permit approval process my highest priority. I am working to fully and expeditiously implement the sixteen recommendations in the Management Partners report. The recruitment of a Development Services Engineer is underway and additional progress has been made on the development of application checklists and a standard review comment format since the Town Council's last meeting. The December edition of *The Woodsider* is in process and focuses on the permit approval process. In addition, I have recently identified and engaged the services of two outside engineering plan check and inspection firms. After they have become familiar with the Town's local regulations, these firms will take on new projects coming into the review pipeline. The firms estimate a ten to fifteen working day review turnaround. These added resources should provide some needed relief to the permit approval process.

It is clear, however, based upon the frustrations voiced during the Town Council's last meeting, that an integral part of making the needed improvements and of being able

to continually identify areas that merit further scrutiny and possible adjustment is to listen to the users of the process and build their observations and suggestions into an ongoing improvement effort. The Management Partners report includes a recommendation that quarterly meetings be held with the development community to discuss regulatory changes, outline the Town's development review process, and other related matters. This recommendation was really designed to be implemented once other process corrections had been completed, in an effort to stay in touch with the Town's customers and keep the lines of communication open. In my view, this recommendation should be augmented by including a series of meetings to be held prior to full implementation of the recommendations in the report.

While I appreciate the willingness of members of the Council and others to act in an advisory capacity by sharing their own observations and those of the residents and building professionals with whom they have contact, I feel strongly that I personally need to reach out to the members of the community to assure them that their concerns matter and that I am committed, as is the staff and the Town Council, to hearing their frustrations, their constructive criticism, and their ideas for improvement. Towards that end, I am planning a series of "Meetings with the Manager" that will be held on several evenings over the course of three-to-four months. I will invite, by personal letter, residents who have gone through or are going through the permit approval process during the last twenty-four months to join me for a group discussion of their experiences with the process and their ideas for making it work better. I will be the only member of the staff in attendance and I will promise to protect the anonymity of those who are willing to share their comments with me. I will have similar meetings with the building professionals (e.g. contractors, architects, engineers) who have been customers of the permit approval process during the last two years. I will provide the Town Council with a report of each meeting, summarizing the comments and indicating additional recommendations to add to the implementation list. I will also provide a monthly status report on implementation progress. In addition to these focused meetings with the Town's recent "customers" I would also welcome hearing the proffered input of Councilmembers, whether it represents their own experience or that of their constituents.

If the Town Council endorses this approach, the planning needed to set the meetings in place can begin immediately. It is likely that the meetings would start in early January, given the upcoming holiday season and the demands it places on people's schedules. The letters of invitation, however, would go out within the next two to three weeks.

CONCLUSION

The trust, respect, and goodwill of the residents of the Town are critical factors that should not be taken for granted. If the Town has lost these, then it is imperative that a good faith effort be made to earn them back again. We are moving forward with many very positive undertakings, such as the construction of Barkley Fields and Park and the upcoming 50th Anniversary celebration(s). The positive energy and feeling of community that will flow from those undertakings will only be enhanced if we are able to assure the Town's residents that we are serious about addressing their concerns and making needed changes to improve their town. Making this effort is a first step in that direction.

Attachment

Report to Town Council
From: Susan George, Town Manager

Agenda Item 10
October 25, 2005

SUBJECT: REPORT ON STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT ON THE ENGINEERING AND PLANNING/BUILDING DEPARTMENTS

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Town Council accept this report.

BACKGROUND

On July 26, 2005, the Town Council received a presentation from Management Partners, Inc., a management consulting firm engaged to evaluate the Town's Engineering Department and its role in the development review process. The Council heard a summary of the key findings in the consultant's report, which was entitled "Development Review Analysis" and which included sixteen recommendations designed to improve the development review process in general and the Engineering Department's role in specific. During the September 27, 2005 Town Council meeting, the Town Manager indicated that she would provide a status report on the implementation of the sixteen recommendations at the next Town Council meeting. This represents the promised status report.

DISCUSSION

Each of the sixteen recommendations is reproduced in the following discussion and the status of each item is provided.

Recommendation 1: Add one dedicated and field experienced engineer to the Engineering Division and make him/her responsible solely for development review.

Status: On September 27, 2005, the Town Council authorized the Town Manager to hire a recruiter to assist the Town in identifying and hiring the new engineer. The firm of CPS Executive Search has been selected and has begun the initial recruitment steps, including the development of display ads for critical governmental and trade-related publications, such as *Western City*. It is estimated that it will take the balance of the calendar year to complete the recruitment process, with interviews to be scheduled for January.

Recommendation 2: Prepare a *detailed* application checklist for all divisions to be used by the applicant in preparing the submittal and by the reviewer in evaluating the submittal.

Status: Examples of the recommended checklist have been obtained from other jurisdictions and work has begun to tailor a checklist to the Town's more specific requirements. Once a draft is completed, the comments and suggestions of several regular users of Town Hall's development process will be solicited prior to finalization.

Recommendation 3: Prepare a standard format for review comments to improve organization and clarity of responses.

Attachment A

Status: This process has begun, but will not be completed until the checklist recommended in Recommendation 2 is substantially completed in order to ensure consistency.

Recommendation 4: If plan quality does not improve measurably with the addition of a development engineer, add clerical staff to ease project manager workload so that they can more thoroughly screen submittals.

Status: This recommendation can not be implemented until after the new engineer position is filled.

Recommendation 5: After the development engineer position is added, set specific review timelines and measure performance against them.

Status: This recommendation can not be implemented until after the new engineer position is filled.

Recommendation 6: Set standards for customer service and measure employee performance against them.

Status: This report notes that this recommendation can not be implemented until after new resources are added. In the interim, some basic standards utilized in other jurisdictions' development review processes are being gathered for consideration.

Recommendation 7: Advertise the Town's willingness to hold pre-application meetings and encourage new applicants to attend one to go over the Town's process and to discuss realistic timelines.

Status: Staff has begun to encourage additional pre-application meetings. An "advertisement" about the availability of these meetings is to be placed on the Town's website and a flyer placed in the information kiosk at Town Hall. The December edition of *The Woodsider* will be dedicated to the entire development process, including pre-application meetings.

Recommendation 8: Copy the applicant/owner on all comments and conditions given to contractors.

Status: Implemented.

Recommendation 9: Publish a website page or community newsletter article on the basics of building in Woodside.

Status: The December edition of *The Woodsider* will be dedicated to the entire development process and a website page developed based upon this information.

Recommendation 10: Hold quarterly meetings with the development community to discuss regulatory changes, outline the Town's development review process, and other related matters.

Status: Not implemented yet. It would be appropriate to include the new engineer in this undertaking from the outset in order to provide consistent information.

Attachment A

Recommendation 11: Create a menu of standard design options and amenities and set design standards as much as possible to reduce variability at the Architecture & Site Review Board.

Status: Not yet implemented. May require additional consulting (architectural) assistance.

Recommendation 12: Assure that applicants are given a copy of staff recommendations prior to finalization and are afforded an opportunity to provide comments in writing for distribution to all decision makers as part of the standard review process.

Status: Partially implemented. Planning Commission and ASRB deadlines are being examined in order to provide applicants with staff reports on a timelier basis. Implementation has been exacerbated by recent departure of Assistant Planner on an extended maternity leave.

Recommendation 13: Set fees and surcharges to fully cover development-related costs.

Status: A consultant has been retained to undertake the needed study and to develop the required fee adjustment justifications. Staff feels that increases in fees should not go into effect until the additional resources needed to improve the development process are in place.

Recommendation 14: Purchase and implement a new computer software system that automates the development review project tracking and financial systems.

Status: A summer intern completed the initial research on available software. A Request for Proposals will be developed to solicit written proposals and hardware needs will be reviewed. The input of the new engineer would be useful in this undertaking.

Recommendation 15: Expand open counter hours to the public to include the noon period and provide some hours open to the public after 3 p.m. when construction work generally winds down.

Status: Not yet implemented. Trying to assess viability of recommendation, given staffing constraints.

Recommendation 16: Provide reviewing employees the workspace necessary to be efficient, as funding and space permit.

Status: Not yet implemented. This is a long-range undertaking that will require an analysis of space and capital funding.

CONCLUSION

Efforts to implement the recommendations in the report are underway. The successful recruitment of a new engineer dedicated to the development review process will provide an opportunity to allocate additional resources to the implementation process, which was anticipated by the consultants. As was noted for the Town Council during the July 26th meeting, and as is stated in the staff report from that evening, additional resources will be

Attachment A

vital to the successful transformation of the development process and to the improvement of customer service.