MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PIERCE COUNTY COUNCIL
for the purpose of a tour of the Planning and Land Services Department

1:00 pm
Wednesday, February 6, 2013

Location: Pierce County Annex, Conference Room D, 2401 S 35th St, Tacoma, WA

Minutes of Special Meetings of the Pierce County Council are not verbatim.

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT:
Connie Ladenburg
Jim McCune
Douglas G. Richardson

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT:  Mike Kruger, Annette Swillie, Amy Cruver, and Alice Sniffen.

This Special Meeting of the Pierce County Council convened at 1:00 pm.

The PALS presentation was led by Dennis Hanberg, Director.

Overview:  PALS leadership, PALS Summary, PALS Timeline
BPA Report
Fiscal Policy
Dashboard
Floor Plans:  Annex, PALS
Organization Chart
Tour of facilities used by the Planning and Land Services Department in the Pierce County
Public Services Building (known as the Pierce County Annex), starting in Conference Room D.

This Special Meeting of the Pierce County Council was adjourned at 2:05 pm.

The agenda and all items included in the meeting packets or handed out at the Special Meeting are
attached and included in the meeting file.

Prepared by:  Mike Kruger, Sr. Legislative Analyst

Approved:

Joyce McDonald, Chair

3-26-13

Date
PIERCE COUNTY
PLANNING & LAND SERVICES
DENNIS HANBERG, DIRECTOR

- Overview
  - PALS Leadership
  - PALS Summary
  - PALS Timeline

- BPA Report

- Fiscal Policy

- Dashboard

- Floor Plans
  - Annex
  - PALS

- Organization Chart
WELCOME TO THE ANNEX, AND

PIERCE COUNTY
PLANNING AND LAND SERVICES
(PALS)

- Dennis Hanberg, Director
  - 253-798-2754, Dhanber@co.pierce.wa.us
  - Initial contact for all issues regarding PALS,
  - Lead for Best Permitting Agency improvements, and budgeting.

- Rick Hopkins, Building Official
  - 253-798-7126, Rhopki1@co.pierce.wa.us
  - Supervisor for all Plans Examiners and Building Inspectors
  - The Division of Building Safety and Inspection includes the Development Center and an Enforcement Section charged with the enforcement of International Building and related construction codes. The Division reviews plans and inspects all new construction, meets regularly with industry focus groups, and investigates dangerous buildings for possible abatement. The Division is responsible for enforcement of building without a permit, and assessment of damage after flood events.

- Warner Webb, Fire Marshal
  - 253-798-7217, WWebb2@ad.co.pierce.wa.us
  - Fire Marshal – Functions closely with all aspects of the Development Center (but not technically a part of PALS)

- Sean Gaffney, Supervisor of Long Range Planning
  - 253-798-2724, Sgaffne@co.pierce.wa.us
  - Supervisor for Long Range Planning Section, which includes planners and GIS experts.
  - The Long Range Planning Division is responsible for guiding Pierce County’s implementation of the Washington State Growth Management Act, Shoreline Management Act, and other state and local mandates related to land use and critical area protection. Long Range Planners develop proposed land use policies and regulations which they present to the Planning Commission, Pierce County Regional Council, and Pierce County Council.
PALS LEADERSHIP CONTINUED:

- **Vicki Diamond**, Manager of Current Planning and Development Center
  - 253-798-3193, Vdiamon@co.pierce.wa.us
  - Supervisor of Current Planners and Permit Technicians.
  - Current Planning is responsible for processing shoreline, subdivision, forest practice, SEPA, and land use applications through citizen land use advisory commissions and public hearings.
  - The Development Center is a one-stop center for intake of development and building applications and information on unincorporated Pierce County. The Development Center is organized with a front line staff of Permit Technicians who are backed by multi-disciplinary Technical Support Staff to provide help in finding solutions.

- **Mitch Brells**, Supervisor of Development Engineering
  - 253-798-3755, MBrells@co.pierce.wa.us
  - Supervisor of Development Engineers and Engineer Inspectors
  - The Development Engineering Division implements the County's NPDES permit requirements as they relate to development. The Division is responsible for any development related plan review, construction inspection, and enforcement in the areas of roadways, stormwater runoff, erosion control, floodplain hazards, landslide hazards, shoreline erosion hazards, and mine hazards.

- **Kathleen Larrabee**, Supervisor of Resource Management
  - 253-798-3628, Kathleen.Larrabee@co.pierce.wa.us
  - Supervisor for Wetland and Fish & Wildlife Biologists
  - Resource Management is the Division which is responsible for the administration, implementation and enforcement of the Wetland and Fish and Wildlife chapters of Code. Resource Management staff also assists the public and other County agencies in interpreting these provisions, provides technical assistance to Long Range Planning in writing policy and code, and coordinates with State agencies on matters of species and habitat concern.

- **Debby Hyde**, Special Projects Coordinator
  - 253-798-7110, Debby.hyde@co.pierce.wa.us
  - Currently leading up efforts for the update to the Shoreline Management Regulations, and the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update
PALS:

Why Does PALS Exist:
- To implement the development regulations and building codes for all regulated activity in unincorporated Pierce County.
- PALS is also charged with maintaining and updating the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan, which provides the framework for the next 20 years of development.

Who are our Customers:
- On a regular basis we help a variety of people: professional builders, developers, interested citizens, property owners, special interest groups and anyone else who walks through our doors or visits our web site.
- Also Elected Officials, other Departments, and other jurisdictions and agencies.

What our Customers Want:
- The majority of our customers are interested in doing something to their property; Building, subdividing, moving dirt, establishing a business, cutting trees, etc. (66% of our visitors want information on how to do something)
- Some people come to PALS to address construction without permits (violations).
- Some people are curious about what their neighbors are doing.
- Some people are curious about what they could potentially do on a piece of property.

What is PALS Responsibility to our Customers:
- Provide courteous service
- Provide Timely - Reliable information and decisions
- Relay complicated information in a clear and concise manor
- Simplify the internal processes as much as possible
○ PALS of the Past:
  • Fast Paced and Intimidating to our customers
  • Piles and Piles of Regulations
  • Guilty of requiring "One more thing.."
  • Long and daunting Land Use Process
  • Perceived as economic roadblock
  • Frustrated Customers
  • Frustrated Staff
  • Frustrated Elected Officials

○ PALS of Today:
  • Technology at PALS, the "new" way of doing business
    ○ Web redesign – user friendly and intuitive
    ○ E-Reviews: Doubled the number of staff doing E-reviews
    ○ On-line payments, currently upwards of 50% of our payments are now made on-line
    ○ E-notify, PALS has over 1,300 users tracking 6,600 applications
    ○ On-line Submittals for Residential applications (and expanding the application types)
    ○ QR's on 'Notice of Applications' and Public Notice Signs
    ○ Ask a Permit Technician (Ability to ask question to Permit Tech's through County web site)
    ○ All Application Review and Comments Available Through Web Site
    ○ Frequent PALS User Dashboard
PALS of Today Continued:

- Simplification of Regulations
  - Consolidation and Clarification of the Pierce County Code (started in 2010)
  - New processing options in the code, Administrative Variance
  - Changes to the SEPA Thresholds, increased to match the maximum allowable thresholds
    - More than 20 residential dwelling units
    - More than 12,000 sq. ft commercial structures
    - No need for SEPA on Bulkhead Repairs

- Changes in Process
  - Reallocation of staff to promote customer service
  - Emphasis on timely and reliable decisions
  - Uniformity of updating of all handouts and forms
  - Straightening the Pipes
○ **PALS of Tomorrow:**
  - Improve Submittal Process
    - Electronic Support
  - Reduce Customer visits by another 20%
  - Increase online submittals
  - Establish a Reserve Fund to support PALS through market fluctuations
  - Establish a Training Program for PALS staff
    - Management Training to improve front line staff
    - Reliable Decisions
    - Consolidation of tasks & responsibilities
  - Increase Over the Counter Permits
  - Continued Emphasis on Customer Service

○ **Partnering to find the appropriate regulatory balance for all citizens of Pierce County**
BPA REPORT
Creating the Best Permitting Agency in the State

Study Report
1-27-11
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Executive Summary

Why we did this Study

Since taking office in 2009, Executive Pat McCarthy has made it a priority to improve the methods of providing County services and the satisfaction of the customers who use those services. A key function designated as a priority for improvement was the permit application review and approval process. The directive given to the Planning & Land Services (PALS) and the Public Work & Utilities (PWU) departments was to create the best permitting agency in Washington State. The best permitting agency provides outstanding customer service, communicates the County’s development regulations clearly, reviews applications in a consistent and predictable manner, provides consistent inspection services. In addition, this department provides policy advice to the elected County officials on improvements to the County’s adopted plans and regulations for the benefit of our region.

Members of the Pierce County Council also have stated a desire to improve the development application and review process to make it more customer/applicant friendly. As a result, the Council passed Ordinance 2009-92s (Section 8) requesting the Executive to “provide a report that examines the opportunities, obstacles, cost savings, and feasibility of consolidating the Planning and Land Services Department with Public Works and Utilities Department.”

The Executive established a Study Team (Team) to systematically respond to both of these requests. The Team’s findings and recommendations are contained in this report.

Summary of results

The Team found that consolidating the two departments into a single organization would not in itself provide better customer service, significant cost savings, or operational efficiencies. Instead of creating one large department, the Team recommends more clearly separating the development processes from infrastructure management. The two departments have responsibilities for the same facilities, such as public roads, stormwater management, and sewers facilities. However, the role of PALS staff essentially focuses on those items before they are constructed and owned by the County. That role involves project review and permitting of land and building development. PWU staff is responsible for maintaining the facilities if they are built to be part of the public system and they are completed and accepted into the County’s ownership. There are also facilities that are reviewed and inspected by PALS staffs that are intended to remain private. PWU does not have responsibility for those assets. After methodically looking at the functions of the two departments, the Team felt it would be better to make a clear distinction between the two departments versus consolidating them.

However, The Team did identify a number of operational functions and processes that could be improved to ensure Pierce County has the best permitting agency in the State. In addition, the Team called for future review and consideration of four functions in the two departments: the Development Engineering functions, Records Management, Code Enforcement, and Long Range Planning.

The Team believes that implementing these improvements will increase customer satisfaction, result in time savings for the customer and the staff, and produce increased operational efficiencies.

While this report provides detail regarding the creation and development of these goals and strategies, it stops short of addressing implementation and incorporation of these concepts into the daily operations of both PALS and PWU. The Team recommends that an implementation team be created to oversee implementation of the study’s recommendations.

Significant findings:
- Most authority and responsibility for development review and approval should be in PALS.
- Staff should be provided ongoing training and improved tools to provide quality answers and decisions.
- PWU's responsibility in the development process should be to provide a quality assurance role where public infrastructure that is accepted into the public inventory as a result of development is evaluated for overall performance.
- Updates to the County's development regulations and standards should continue with a focus on clarification and reduction of conflicts.
- A new funding model should be implemented to provide stability to the development review process.
- All of the County's long-range planning disciplines and Code amendment processes need to be aligned in a new multi-agency format.

**Goals and Strategies for Implementation**

The Team developed nine goals and those are listed below with highlighted strategies for their implementation. The complete list of strategies is provided beginning on page 9 of this report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
<th>STRATEGY HIGHLIGHTS</th>
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| 1     | Modify the permitting process and departments' structure to maximize skills and decision making authority within PALS. | Train and reorganize staff as necessary  
- Centralize development activities in PALS  
- Focus asset management duties in PWU |
| 2     | Improve the permit process and supporting information and technology systems so decisions can be timely, reliable, and predictable. | Increase use of electronic resources  
- Focus service more on results rather than just time increments  
- Create options for over-the-counter issuance |
| 3     | Continually improve on the permit process, outcomes and cost to improve the satisfaction of applicants, information-only customers, and stakeholders. | Increase user outreach  
- Communicate more effectively  
- Establish on-going improvement process |
| 4     | Ensure adequate resources are available to implement a quality permit process that meets the level of service specified by the Executive and County Council. | Clarify service expectations  
- Establish stable funding mechanisms |
| 5     | Provide quality permit processes that contribute to a healthy, safe, economically vibrant and sustainable community. | Recognize economic benefits of development  
- Continue Code simplification  
- Coordinate long-range planning efforts |
| 6     | Ensure department leaders have the necessary skills and lead strategic change and continuous improvement successfully. | Train leadership for leading change  
- Reward and acknowledge success |
| 7     | Develop and retain a technically competent workforce which provides quality customer service and quality products. | Enhance and reward good customer service skills  
- Provide necessary training |
| 8     | Give employees the tools and resources to be efficient and effective. | Provide technology improvements  
- Allow remote and expanded access to information |
| 9     | Create a culture in both departments that values timely and quality decision making in the permit process | Promote timely and quality decision making  
- Evaluate performance for these skills |
Study Methodology

Chronology of actions:
January 2009
The Executive made it a County priority to improve customer service.

May 2009
The Executive created the PALS/PWU joint strategic team to research ideas on how to improve customer service for those citizens applying for permits.

August 2009
The Executive created a committee of industry and stakeholder representatives to identify permit process issues and suggest improvements.

October 2009
PALS/PWU issued a joint strategic plan.

November 2009
The County Council approved Ordinance 2009-925 requesting the Executive to examine opportunities, obstacles, cost savings and feasibility of consolidating PALS/PWU.

March 2010
The Executive established a Study Team to continue identifying permit process improvements and provide recommendations.

Since April 2010, the Team has met most weeks for three hour Team meetings. The Team members were given work assignments that needed to be completed between meetings to ensure the most productive use of meeting time. In addition, the co-leads were periodically given additional tasks by Deputy Executive Kevin Phelps that were designed to stimulate discussion about topics, products or processes that would potentially be helpful to making recommendations.

The Team began the process by educating each other and discussing the following items:
- The organization and functions of PALS and PWU;
- The development review, permitting, and construction process;
- How customers get information and interact with the Development Center staff;
- PWU's role as a "customer" in the development process;
- The development and evolution of the County's codes and regulations;
- The roles of code enforcement within the two departments;
- Working affinities and relationships between the departments.

In order to methodically look at various aspects of the departments and their functions, the Team used these techniques to collect information.

- **Affinity Questionnaire** – For the purpose of identifying the importance, necessity, and frequency of interactions between staff of the various sections of both departments, staff was asked to complete a questionnaire.

  **Result:** This exercise allowed the Team to validate the importance of interactions between different sections relating to the development process.

- **S.W.O.T. Analysis** – In order to focus the discussion, Team members were asked to identify strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats that would address known or perceived issues in the development process. Those were captured in five categories:
  - Tools
  - Structure
  - Organization
  - People and Culture
  - Facilities

  **Result:** This exercise created a list of items that were further discussed for the purpose of coming to conclusions and making recommendations on process improvements.
• **Ideal Process Activity** – In order to allow for an open and broad discussion, the individual Team members were given the opportunity to start anew and design "the best" permitting process.

*Result:* This exercise provided the opportunity for Team members to freely design a process that they felt could address issues, including those identified in the Sticky Note exercise, and would result in "the best" development process.

• **Website review** – So the Team could benefit from other jurisdictions’ examples, the Team (along with the Information Technology Director and department information technology staff) looked at other agencies’ web sites.

*Result:* This exercise provided examples of good communication of development related materials, ease of use, and online application submittal capability.

• **Baldrige Matrix development** – In order to organize the thoughts of the Team members, a subgroup of members prepared draft goals, strategies and targets using the Baldrige format for preparation of a matrix and spreadsheet that could be further refined and completed by a future implementation team.

*Result:* This exercise allowed a more complete vetting of the Team’s recommendations in a format that helps look at the process holistically while also putting them in a format that complements the County Executive’s county-wide strategic planning process.

• **Consolidation of Departments exercise** – So that each function of the two departments could be considered for improved efficiencies and potential cost savings, the Team members reviewed various options regarding consolidating all or portions of the departments.

*Result:* This exercise identified four functions between the two departments that warranted further review and consideration (DENG, Records Management, Enforcement, and Long Range Planning).

• **Potential Cost Benefits through Task/Function consolidation** – To further refine a consolidation recommendation, the Team members worked through an assessment of functions within PALS and PWU to identify potential for savings through consolidation.

*Result:* This exercise identified some efficiency opportunities by consolidating the two departments.

• **Co-leads** were asked to look at other agencies’ organization structures and development processes and see if there were efficient models to emulate.

• **Co-leads** were asked to review the responsibility and authority of the County Engineer position.

• **Co-leads** interviewed 24 staff members in order to ask them four questions in a face-to-face setting.
The Team decided that any organizational or process changes should be measurable. To support that effort the Team incorporated the many comments, suggestions and ideas into a report that follows a Baldrige model for performance excellence using a Balanced Score Card approach. Included in the basic structure of a Balanced Scorecard are topical areas such as Process, Customers, Financial, Value/Benefit, Leadership, and Capacity. The "balance" comes from ensuring that Goals and Strategies are developed in these key topical areas and that success relies on achievement of not just one goal but all of them as a whole. As a result of this study the vision, mission, goals and strategies were defined as follows:

**Vision**  
The best permitting agency in the State

**Mission**  
Pierce County delivers customer-focused permits to enhance livability in the County

**Goals**

**Process**  
1. Modify the permitting process and departments' structure to maximize skills and decision making authority within PALS.  
2. Improve the permit process and supporting information and technology systems so decisions can be timely, reliable, and predictable.

**Customers**  
3. Continually improve on the permit process, outcomes and cost to improve the satisfaction of applicants, information-only customers, and stakeholders.

**Financial**  
4. Ensure adequate resources are available to implement a quality permit process that meets the level of service specified by the Executive and County Council.

**Value/Benefit**  
5. Provide quality permit processes that contribute to a healthy, safe, economically vibrant and sustainable community.

**Leadership**  
6. Ensure department leaders have the necessary skills and lead strategic change and continuous improvement successfully.

**Capacity**  
7. Develop and retain a technically competent workforce which provides quality customer service and quality products.  
8. Give permit employees the tools and resources to be efficient and effective.  
9. Create a unified culture in both departments that values timely and quality decision making in the permit process.
Following is a discussion of each stated goal and the strategies the Team believes should be detailed further and prioritized for implementation.

**PROCESS - Service and System Delivery**

**# 1 Modify the permitting process and departments' structure to maximize skills and decision making authority within PALS.**

The current structure of PALS and PWU supports a permit and project application review process that can have numerous staff in both departments and in a number of sections and divisions of those departments reviewing applications. For certain applications, as many as 15 to 20 personnel may be reviewing a particular project. This structure does not always support timely, reliable and predictable decisions on projects.

**Strategies:**

1.1 Ensure PALS staff has all of the ability, responsibility, and necessary authority for development review and acceptance, including but not limited to road and stormwater improvements and extensions, slope stability issues, flood certificates, traffic studies and mitigation, flood studies, channelization plans, and geotechnical reports.

1.2 Empower appropriate PALS staff to handle infrastructure development deviations under the authority delegated by the County Engineer.

1.3 Continue to have PWU-Sewer staff review and approve development applications for sewers since this function is not a duplication of effort. However the Sewer review staff is part of the development process team structure and should be required to comply with established review standards.

1.4 Assign to PWU staff a quality assurance role for monitoring accepted infrastructure projects. When issues are identified, PWU staff would make suggestions for revisions to the Code and standards that if adopted by the County Council would be used for the review and acceptance of future development projects.

1.5 Delegate to PWU the responsibility to provide on-going interpretation training to both PWU and PALS staff to stay abreast of technological changes or troublesome design, maintenance or construction issues.

1.6 Clarify that the responsibility to maintain and operate assets falls to PWU once an item has successfully gone through the development process, and has been approved and constructed in compliance with County Code.

1.7 Ensure that staff doing the development review are trained and has the expertise to provide timely and reliable decisions. If there are gaps in the staff's skills, then resources should be provided so those needs can be addressed by contracting with other departments or outside sources.

1.8 Ensure the Development Center technicians are trained and given the authority to provide timely and reliable decisions regarding the development process. This would be designed to eliminate the need to have the "experts" interact on most inquiries.

1.9 Evaluate the possibility of consolidating inspections for efficiency.
#2 Improve the permit process and supporting information and technology systems so decisions can be timely, reliable, and predictable.

In an average year more than 20,000 permits are issued through PALS and thousands of people come to the Development Center. Many of those people seek information on their specific property or want to explore the potential for some type of development or construction. Others arrive ready to apply for specific permits. This process entails a great deal of direct personal contact either through technicians or specific professional staff. The process for permitting and handling all of the information requests needs to be made more efficient and focused toward opportunities that provide the information through less labor intensive means. While direct personal contact still needs to be available, the focus should be to reduce the need for staff contact by improving tools and improving the ways of getting information and processing development projects.

Strategies:

2.1 Maximize the authority for review, comment, approval, inspection, and final signoff of a project under one Director, one authority, and one department structure.

2.2 Develop an E-submittal program for every type of permit/application and reward those participants who use this process.

2.3 Develop an E-review (paperless) for every type of permit/application and reward those customers who use this step.

2.4 Increase the amount of information available per project to the general public and on-line inquiries including letters, memos, maps, site plans, Hearing Examiner decisions, etc.

2.5 Add social media opportunities through tools such as Facebook, live chat, emails, and e-blasts.

2.6 Clarify the role of the Land Use Advisory Commissions (LUAC) in the review of individual applications. If the LUACs are to be used to provide meaningful comments, the areas of authority need to be clarified and the timing of the LUAC participation placed at the beginning of the process.

2.7 Establish criteria to reduce the number of people/touches it takes to reach a decision for a project.

2.8 Develop standardized Sewer details and designs to be provided to the applicant for Tenant Improvement (TI). Develop over the counter Sewer permits for projects that meet a "like for like" TI definition.

2.9 Develop project process and submittal standards that facilitates a goal of no more than one re-submittal per application.

2.10 Identify actions and establish a one day response timeline for those actions when the applicant is using County developed standardized details/design.

2.11 Work with the TPCHD to improve the septic and water system review as part of the development review process including the use of electronic submissions and review material transfers.

2.12 Work with the Pierce County Fire Marshal’s office to improve life safety reviews and inspections.

2.13 Establish and secure approval of an outsourcer plan for handling work during peaks that would be ready to implement quickly when the need arises.
#3 Continually improve the permit process, outcomes, and costs to improve the satisfaction of applicants, information-only customers, and stakeholders.

The PALS Development Center is traditionally seen as the County's "front porch" or "window of access" to information ranging from a simple zone classification question to more complex questions regarding critical area regulations or construction and development permit issues. The Development Center serves as the initial point of contact and on average handles up to 20,000 customers per year. These customers come to the Development Center to get information, apply for permits, or to check on permit status. Typically about 50% of those people visiting the Development Center are not making an application but are seeking information about their property or have questions for specific technical staff that may affect their property and their submittal.

Long lines, backlogs, adoption of many new regulations during the last ten years, and recent staff reductions due to a slow economy have contributed to a poor customer service reputation that continues to this day, whether deserved or not. Some customers who have tried to get their information via alternative methods such as by phone or internet have voiced similar levels of dissatisfaction.

**Strategies:**

3.1 Increase use of customer friendly language and incorporate that into personal explanations, the web site and application forms.

3.2 Develop a user-friendly web design (including design comments and inputs from the private sector) that provides answers to inquiries faster and reduces applicants and information seekers' trips to the annex.

3.3 Develop customer surveys to gather suggestions and measure customer satisfaction.

3.4 Develop regular forums including the use of social/electronic media for the purpose of exchanging ideas and communicating more regularly with more of the users of the County development process.

3.5 Train staff that their role is to help applicants find a way to get approval for their development project that meets County Code even if that means offering alternative suggestions to the applicant's submittal.

3.6 Establish a mentor program to support less experienced staff with consistency of development decisions.

3.7 Clarify and enforce the separation of authority of review / inspection of public infrastructure projects vs. ownership and maintenance of public infrastructure.

3.8 Establish specific review processes based on complexity of applications.
# 4 Ensure adequate resources are available to implement a quality permit process that meets the level of service specified by the Executive and County Council.

The development process system ensures compliance with local, state, and federal law and is relied upon by the public and development community to ensure that new development meets required standards. The work associated with implementing this system can be complex, diverse, and costly and thus needs to be adequately financed.

In addition, staff members have a responsibility to provide land use and development information to people who are not submitting an application or paying an application fee. Some costs to provide information only are a public service and may best be paid for through the County’s General Fund. Others are specific to a particular permit process and project. Those could be supported by a fee for service structure. Other efforts such as those related to public infrastructure are logically paid for by the specific enterprise fund such as the Surface Water Management or Road fund.

In addition there needs to be a strong fiscal policy that provides adequate resource on a continual basis. If this requires the establishment of an enterprise fund for development related activities so that there can be carryover of funds between years, then that or some other mechanism to accomplish the same result should be explored. A holistic method of budgeting for all of these services needs to be redefined through the development of a sound fiscal policy that addresses the level of General Fund monies vs. fees collected; that sets goals for desired levels of service and outcomes; and that is relatively stable from year to year regardless of the annual increases or decreases in the overall County financial circumstances.

To the greatest extent possible the County Council and the County Executive should provide a level of resources that meets the service expectation of the customers.

Strategies:

4.1 Establish a sound fiscal policy/program that includes a revamped fee structure which is comprehensive in that it identifies what services should have fees associated with them and the methods of collection.

4.2 Establish a fiscal policy that provides funding for staffing, training, and technology improvements that meets the stipulated level of service.

4.3 Establish an enterprise fund or some other method that allows for carryover between fiscal years.
#5 Provide quality permit processes that contribute to a healthy, safe, economically vibrant and sustainable community.

The long term livability and overall fiscal and environmental health of our community relies on a balance of fair, thoughtful long-range plans, regulations, and quality development projects. In addition the County needs to coordinate long-range planning of its infrastructure such as transportation, sewer, flood hazard reduction, surface water management, potable water, parks and land use designations, and protection of unique community, neighborhood, and environmental features.

Strategies:

5.1 Consolidate the long-range planning efforts and regulation updates of the various departments for the purpose of providing a more comprehensive, cohesive product for the County. While these functions should not be moved into a single department, they should be required to be coordinated and strongly aligned under the administrative authority of the County Executive.

5.2 Simplify the County Code through on-going code consolidation, more frequent updates, and modifications.

5.3 Establish a multi-agency process in which newly introduced code language is reviewed for possible conflict with existing codes.

5.4 Preserve the special characteristics of each community plan area while consolidating general design elements through upcoming community plan revisions.

5.5 Encourage a long-term goal to have the Land Use Advisory Commissions focus on priority community and neighborhood needs such as safe streets, crime watch programs, park/aesthetic improvements versus individual development applications.

5.6 Make the stability of the County's economic development a priority through actions that establish specific targeted goals.

5.7 Retain Code Enforcement efforts as currently structured (distinct responsibilities in each of the two departments) with support from technical staff and agency expertise depending on the issue at hand. Continue to look for increased efficiencies, including possible future consolidation.
**LEADERSHIP**

**#6 Ensure department leaders have the necessary skills and lead strategic change and continuous improvement successfully.**

Leadership has to include elected officials, department directors, line supervisors and managers. When a strategic goal or directive has been adopted it is important that everyone is included in the understanding of and the need for the action. The leaders need to understand how to participate and support the desired outcome and the tasks needed to accomplish success.

**Strategies:**

6.1 Develop training for supervisors focused on leading and managing change.

6.2 Establish internal and external mentors and partnerships with those who use the development process to promote further training, sharing of expertise, and problem solving.

6.3 Acknowledge competency and reward success.

6.4 Include the ability to lead and manage change as part of the evaluation criteria in personnel reviews.
#7 Develop and retain a technically competent workforce which provides quality customer service and quality products.

As public service providers, it is important that PALS and PWU staff provide quality customer service at all times. It is also imperative to set performance expectations, provide training opportunities and evaluate staff on a consistent basis to meet the stated goals.

**Strategies:**

7.1 Incorporate quality customer service criteria into staff performance reviews.

7.2 Make customer service skills a priority and performance expectation for new hires and existing staff.

7.3 Develop an employee training program that focuses on customer service.

7.4 Provide supervisors, managers and leads with training on how to provide an effective employee performance assessment.

7.5 Recognize staff that meet or exceed customer service expectations and measures.
#8 **Give employees the tools and resources to be efficient and effective.**

In order to balance available resources with customer needs, the County should dedicate the tools and resources needed to support staff’s ability to provide information, process requests, and advance a project through the development process in a manner that is consistent with the goal of having the best permitting process in state.

**Strategies:**

8.1 Create a call center whose staff provide reliable answers to development inquiries and thus reduce trips to the Annex.

8.2 Develop a program for inspectors to have work schedules downloaded nightly to assigned computers, and equip inspection vehicles with mounts, wireless connections, and GPS to make workflow more efficient.

8.3 Prioritize IT Department requests as they support development review processes and thus improve the turnaround time from items coming out of the IT Department.

8.4 Train staff and expand administrative authority to allow for decision making for some of the cases that now require decisions by the Hearing Examiner (HE).

8.5 Formalize a process for timely code interpretations and policy review that also becomes the basis for future code revisions and amendments.

8.6 Consider future consolidation or coordination of Records Management, including file consolidation and public disclosure requests, once the Information Technology department has completed the electronic records management system.
#9 Create a culture in both departments that values timely and quality decision making in the permit process.

Input from team members, employee interviews, and development customers suggests that current cultures in both PALS and PWU may not universally recognize that facilitation of development is an element of their work.

Strategies:

9.1 Develop a culture of solution finders that help customers design their projects within the Code.

9.2 Staff should understand and accept the value of a timely and quality decision making development review process.

9.3 Evaluate mid-management structure for efficiencies in the areas of problem resolution, task delegation, and work assignments.

9.4 Restructure and formalize a process for handling customer and cross-department inquiries and issues.
**Acronyms and Abbreviations:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Adopted Pierce County plans and regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DENG</td>
<td>Development Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>Hearing Examiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUAC</td>
<td>Land Use Advisory Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPDES</td>
<td>National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PALS</td>
<td>Planning and Land Services - Pierce County department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWU</td>
<td>Public Works and Utilities - Pierce County department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Study Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>TI</td>
<td>Tenant Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPCHD</td>
<td>Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

General Fund
Enterprise Fund

The Team included:

Team Sponsor:
Kevin Phelps, Deputy Executive

Team Members:
Debby Hyde, Team Co-Lead
Dennis Hanberg, Team Co-Lead
Brian Ziegler, Director of Public Works and Utilities
Toby Rickman, Deputy Director of Public Works and Utilities
Brian Stacy, County Engineer
Chuck Kleeberg, Director of Planning and Land Services
Gordon Aleshire, Assistant Director of Planning and Land Services
Mitch Brells, Development Engineering Manager
Denise Dyer, Economic Development Manager
Jodi Woodcock, Deputy Director of Emergency Management
Hugh Taylor, Senior Legislative Analyst, County Council
Danni Colo, Executive Secretary
APPENDIX A

During the course of this study, Team members were provided thoughts and observations from staff, development industry professionals, and the general public. Some of those comments are reflected in the following statements. They are grouped to correspond with the goals outlined in the study.

**Goal #1 Process – Service and System Delivery**
- There are too many steps involved in the review of a project from the point of getting information, submitting an application, to the final approvals.
- Time is lost by the physical routing of paperwork to staff that may be located in different building locations.
- Time is lost when an application requires multiple interactions between the applicant and the reviewing staff.
- Delays in responses to the applicant occur as a result of internal differences of opinions and conflicting interpretations of code, standards, and policy.
- There are different priorities between the review and permitting staff and the staff who own, maintain and operate the infrastructure. These differences in priorities create conflict during project review, design and construction phases.
- As the owner of the public road and storm infrastructure, PWU should establish the standards and then transfer that knowledge/expertise through training to PALS staff to do the review, inspection and acceptance of the infrastructure.
- The Development Engineering (DENG) section has relinquished (probably unintentionally) some of the authority granted to them by the County Engineer by deferring to PWU technical staff in Roads and Surface Water Management.
- Development Center staff, which are the first contact for getting development process information, have been restricted in what information they can personally provide the customer. The complexity of the codes have been the reason for this process adjustment because of the concern of being wrong or overridden by another staff member's opinion.
  - Staff have fallen back to other agency "experts" to provide information
  - The public is requesting access to the "experts" in order to get questions answered
  - The public is requesting access to the "experts" in order to get more satisfactory, timely, and reliable answers
  - The more experienced staff who are doing the development reviews are being interrupted by these information requests
  - Lack of confidence or expertise by staff can create delays in the review process and requires interaction for the customer with multiple staff
  - The applicants are demanding face to face interactions with staff because they believe it will move their specific project forward at a faster pace
- Several PALS and PWU sections are currently involved in the inspection and acceptance of projects causing duplication of efforts, potential conflicts due to differences of opinion or interpretations, and loss of efficiencies.

**Goal #2 Process – Service and System Delivery**
- The process is perceived as overly complicated with too many staff involved in the review and decision making for each permit application.
- With the increased complexity of the Code, the Permit Technicians are directed to hand off technical questions to the Technical Support staff.
- Staff encourages customers' use of a drop box (Kiosk) for applications, but the applicants would prefer to submit in person to assure acceptance and vesting.
- Information customers may get assisted within 20 minutes for their first contact, but may need to stay several hours, or return several times as they need to speak with individual staff professionals.
- The current process does not identify a lead for each application that can be the contact for the applicant and who is responsible not only for their own technical review but to ensure the application review is completed.
There is a lack of trust by review staff that the information accepted in an application by the permit technicians will be complete or to their individual satisfaction.

Currently, the development review process is managed and measured in terms of time increments, not customer satisfaction.

Technology is not being used to its full advantage (examples: electronic submittals and reviews).

**Goal #3 Customers – Public Service**

Early in 2010, Pierce County began a customer-survey program to solicit feedback from citizens using our services. 102 survey responses were received for the PALS Department and are detailed below.

**Our Service Met Your Expectations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Response</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>21%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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</table>

**Employee Providing Service Was Helpful**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Response</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Your Wait Time Was Reasonable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Response</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51%</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>29%</td>
<td>Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Customers complain that the attitude of staff is to create roadblocks that delay or stop a project rather than look for solutions to help the project advance.

Often, customers point out that they get different answers to their questions depending to whom they talk.

Customers complain that staff will require things that are not in code but that are individual preferences of the permit reviewer.

Customers feel that their questions regarding their property are specific only to their project so they want to come to the Development Center and inquire in person. However, the long lines/wait time at the Development Center cause a frustrating experience.

The use of review time standards is perceived by some applicants as a screen for delay in reviewing applications. It is reported that some applicants have been told the reviewer has “14 days to respond and will probably need all 14 days”, not differentiating the complexity of the submittal.

Staff is professional and technically trained and often communicates with the customer in a technical manner that is not easily understood.

**Goal #4 Financial – Financial Stewardship**

PALS has experienced substantial reductions to their General Fund revenue.

Fees are not always commensurate with the amount of time and efforts expended.

The fiscal structure for the PALS department does not ensure adequate funding stability.

The fees collected for the application review process are put in the County's General Fund. Those funds are not specified for the development review process and thus may be used to address other County priorities.

The current General Fund policy does not allow for a carryover of department funds between fiscal years.

**Goal #5 Value/Benefit – Livable Community**

Long-range planning efforts in infrastructure development, land use, economic development, schools, etc. are not well coordinated thus create conflicts of priorities and the application of practical decisions.
Numerous Community Plans have been created that provide an additional level of complexity to the County regulations. The Community Plans often include elements that reach beyond the protection of a particular feature unique to the community and thereby add unnecessary layers of requirements.

**Goal #6 Leadership**
- Managers from the different departments are not always working together on achieving the County’s various priorities thereby providing conflicting messages to staff. For example, PALS staff base their review and approval on vesting rights and code requirements, while staff in PWU may review a project to a higher standard that could result in the asset lasting longer or performing better.
- Managers have been through previous initiatives that promoted changes that may not have been successful, so are hesitant to try new strategies.
- Staff has been asked to make changes and perform more efficiently without an understanding of why the proposed changes are being implemented and without additional training, or resources. This leads to questions and lack of understanding of leadership goals and objectives.
- Staff has been asked to modify work processes without an understanding of the changing goals, and being provided additional training or resources.

**Goal #7 Capacity - Talent Management**
- Current training and evaluation procedures don’t focus on customer service.
- Current evaluation forms aren’t a useful tool for differentiating between high performers and low performers.
- Performance evaluation expectations for some job classifications haven’t been clearly established.
- Supervisors and managers have not been trained on how to provide an effective employee performance assessment.
- Staff is not consistent in meeting department expectations on returning customer inquiries.

**Goal #8 Capacity - Talent Management**
- The web pages are full of information necessary to apply for and receive an approval or permit, but the format makes it challenging for the public to find the information.
- The use of the internet for the purpose of getting information has grown substantially; however PALS’ and PWU’s web pages are not well edited and linked for development related activities.
- There are electronic tools that are currently available to staff that would facilitate the distribution of application materials and review comments. This could save time in routing.
- There are tools available for electronic scheduling and inspection tracking that can provide a way to get more work done on a daily basis.
- Staff use PALS Plus as a time management tool for development review but don’t often use it to its full capability to communicate project status to their customer.

**Goal #9 Capacity - Talent Management**
- Staff sometimes try to enforce what they believe is best for a project without the necessary code requirements to back up their request.
- Code is complicated. Interpretations or complying with multiple codes and policies may feel like roadblocks to what the customer is requesting.
- Staff at times has been directed by supervisors to not provide suggestions or assist in design solutions as there has been concern that such assistance may be considered actually designing a project and thus incur an additional liability to the County.
- Staff can use the County Code to review applications from the perspective of identifying Code conflicts or they can look to facilitate bringing the project into compliance with Code and successfully through the review, construction and approval process.
FISCAL POLICY
RESOLUTION NO. R2011-129

A Resolution of the Pierce County Council Supporting the Planning and Land Services (PALS) Fiscal Policy in Accordance with the “Creating the Best Permitting Agency in the State” Report.

Whereas, the Pierce County Council passed Ordinance No. 2009-92s requesting the Executive to provide a report that examines the opportunities, obstacles, cost savings, and feasibility of consolidating the Planning and Land Services with Public Works and Utilities Department; and

Whereas, the Executive established a Study Team to respond to the consolidation issues raised by the County Council and to address how to improve County services and the satisfaction of the customers who use those services specific to permit application review and the approval process; and

Whereas, on January 27, 2011, the Study Team released the report ‘Creating the Best Permitting Agency in the State’ (BPA) which determined consolidation of the Planning and Land Services and Public Works and Utility departments would not result in better customer service, and identified a number of operational functions and processes that could be improved to ensure Pierce County has the best permitting agency in the State; and

Whereas, the initial meeting of the Executive Steering Committee to implement the BPA Report on April 20, 2011, determined the creation of a Fiscal Policy for PALS was a high priority for the Committee with specific emphasis on determining the critical level of staffing, establishing a reserve fund, and phased fee increases; and

Whereas, the Fiscal Policies were developed based on the BPA Report, PALS Fee Policy Recommendations of 2008, and from the input of the Executive Steering Committee; and

Whereas, the Executive Steering Committee met on May 25, 2011 and June 22, 2011, to review the PALS Fiscal policy; and

Whereas, a subcommittee of the Executive Steering committee met on June 8, 2011, to refine the PALS Fiscal Policy; and

Whereas, this Resolution provides further fiscal clarification and supersedes Resolution No. R2009-111s which outlines the County’s policy of an 80 percent level of self support in the Planning and Land Services Department; and
Whereas, it is imperative for the sustainability of PALS that the Fiscal Policy is implemented in conjunction with the 2012 and future PALS Budgets; Now Therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of Pierce County:

Section 1. The County Council supports the Planning and Land Services Fiscal Policy as described in Exhibit A, which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference, in its efforts to implement the 'Creating the Best Permitting Agency in the State' Report.

Section 2. Planning and Land Services should prepare its 2012 Budget consistent with the Planning and Land Services Fiscal Policy described in Exhibit A.

ADOPTED this 13th day of December, 2011.

ATTEST:

Denise D. Johnson
Clerk of the Council

Roger Bush
Council Chair
## PALS Fiscal Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Supported by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Fees should cover 100% of the following:  
   a. Direct labor for processing, plan review, and inspection including Public Works Utility transportation impact analysis and design review.  
   b. Indirect labor, overhead expenses in PALS budget.  
   c. Countywide indirect costs that support the PALS application review operation.  
   d. SEPA determinations and administrative decisions. | PALS Fee Policy Committee  
Recommendation #1  
BPA Strategy 4.2  
Resolution No. R2009-111s |
| 2. Not fee funded (100% General Fund):  
   a. Code Enforcement  
   b. General Information  
   c. Long Range Planning  
   d. LUAC proceedings | |
| 2. The life cycle of many land use and site development projects span two or more fiscal years. PALS should begin determining (by some means) the budgeted cost of work remaining at each year-end and develop a fee model that provides revenue when the work is performed. | PALS Fee Policy Committee  
Recommendation #2  
BPA Strategy 4.1 |
| 3. Establish Critical Level Staffing through a “Cost of Service Study” which identifies the minimum staff necessary to accept, process and review applications consistent with adopted Pierce County Code, and meet all State and Federal mandates. PALS should establish a reserve fund to draw from during a down fiscal cycle to cover critical level staffing and expenses for a period of three months. | PALS Fee Policy Committee  
Recommendation #3  
BPA Strategy 4.3 |
| 4. PALS shall provide a level of service consistent with the established timeframes in Title 18, General Provisions, Chapter 18.60, Review Process. | Zucker Audit # 76, 77, 168 |
| 5. PALS should have flexible expenditure authority to adjust resources to maintain service levels in response to changes in workload through utilization of the PALS reserve fund. | PALS Fee Policy Committee  
Recommendation #4 |
| 6. The General Fund contribution to PALS should be adjusted annually based on new programs, State mandates and/or regulations added to PALS’ responsibilities. | PALS Fee Policy Committee  
Recommendation #6  
Zucker Audit #10 |
| 7. The General Fund shall cover the deficit when specifically identified application fees do not equate actual costs to process (i.e., appeals). | Executive Steering Committee, 2011 |
| 8. Fee increases should be considered carefully so as to not shock the current market. All necessary fee increases should be implemented in a phased manner when possible. | PALS Fee Policy Committee  
Recommendation #8  
Zucker Audit #10 |
| 9. Implement this fiscal policy over four years beginning with the 2012 budget. Develop a fee adjustment program to ensure the change in fees is made with the least possible impact to our customers. | Executive Steering Committee, 2011 |
| 10. Fees shall be reviewed annually to verify they reflect actual development processing costs. | Executive Steering Committee, 2011 |
DASHBOARD
Building Division Review Dates

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<tr>
<th>Project Type</th>
<th>Review Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Single Family/Duplex</td>
<td>01/24/2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other Residential</td>
<td>01/28/2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>12/21/2012</td>
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Scheduled Inspections for Today: 02/06/2013

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<th>Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>664725</td>
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<td>Samuel Ball</td>
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<tr>
<td>709855</td>
<td>Gas Test</td>
<td>Samuel Ball</td>
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<tr>
<td>714947</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Skip Geosen</td>
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<td>Final</td>
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<td>714968</td>
<td>Residential Drainage</td>
<td>Skip Geosen</td>
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<td>718289</td>
<td>Gas Test</td>
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<td>Samuel Ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>773541</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Samuel Ball</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lobby hours are 9:00am to 2:00pm

Customers Currently Waiting: 2

Average Wait Time: 1 minute

Average Transaction Time: 10 minutes

Search and Use Our Permitting System

Click on the Search button above to find Applications/Permits. You can then use the tabs in the detail screen to see the Reviews, Inspections, Status, Fees and much more. This is also where you can interact with the Application/Permit (paying any outstanding fees and scheduling inspections for example). The Resources menu gives you access to additional information and services. You can get access to much of our data by using the options in the Reports menu.
FLOOR PLANS