



**CITY OF BOULDER
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**

MEETING DATE: February 3, 2015

AGENDA TITLE: Update on P&DS Advisors Group

PRESENTER/S

Jane S. Brautigam, City Manager

Maureen Rait, Executive Director of Public Works

David Driskell, Executive Director of Community Planning and Sustainability

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This item is an update on the P&DS Advisors group that staff has convened on a periodic basis since 2006. The P&DS Advisors group consists of Boulder community members interested in city business processes involving land use, engineering and building permit issuance: essentially, how the community's adopted vision for development, as embodied in city codes and regulations, are applied as efficiently and fairly as possible in the review process, for everything from fence and sign permits and residential remodels to larger developments.

The P&DS Advisors Group includes representatives from some of the most frequent customers of the city's [Services Center](#), which is the one-stop, public in-take and information center for the city's development-related functions. This group also includes representatives from neighborhoods and public boards. Since April 5, 2006, City of Boulder staff has held 20 meetings with the P&DS Advisors to discuss ways to improve the city's land use, engineering and building permit-related business processes. These meetings focus on customer service improvements and do not involve the discussion of specific development proposals or serve as a forum for policy deliberation.

BACKGROUND

In the late 1990s, the Departments of Community Planning & Sustainability (CP&S) and Public Works (PW) teamed with Information Technology to acquire land management software. Its implementation required close collaboration and the documentation of existing business processes. That experience highlighted opportunities to improve those processes.

A "service area" known as Planning & Development Services (P&DS) was implemented in 2001 to support all the development-related work functions across the two departments of CP&S and PW. This was done following the establishment of a one-stop-shop on the 3rd floor of the Park Central Building, which integrated multiple "public counters" managed by the two departments that had existed previously in various locations in the downtown campus. Additionally, the P&DS special revenue fund was established as fees are collected for the services that are

provided. The fund financial provides a transparent way of illustrating how those revenues are used to fund services and allows the multi-year aspect of construction to be considered; expenditures related to the services that are provided do not always occur during the same year the revenue is collected.

In 2005 (and again in 2007), the city hired business consultant Ray Wilson to conduct an independent assessment of how primary employers view “doing business in Boulder.” Mr. Wilson conducted interviews and reported his findings to City Council and staff and indicated that the city’s development related processes (land use, engineering and building permit review) were factors that impacted primary employers.

In November 2005, city staff met with the Boulder Economic Council (BEC) to discuss the issues that were identified in that assessment and provide an update on initiatives recently implemented. The BEC appreciated the update and supported the concept of more routine meetings to foster an on-going communication link.

At the time, the city asked who would be interested in attending such meetings and developed a list of group participants based upon a show of hands. The city supplemented the list by adding board members and neighborhood representatives, and contacted those designated to confirm their availability and interest. With regard to the latter, with development at the time focused around the downtown, representatives from the Whittier and Goss Grove neighborhoods were included.

The first meeting of the group was held on April 5, 2006. This initial meeting provided an overview of the Planning and Public Works departments and highlighted the service area and fund known as “Planning & Development Services.” The meeting also provided information updates on current initiatives; permit activity as well as a venue to provide feedback for business process improvements.

There have been a total of 20 meetings of this group.

ANALYSIS

The P&DS Advisor meetings focus on information updates and ways to improve the city's land use, engineering and building permit- related processes. These meetings do not involve discussion of specific development proposals or serve as a forum for policy deliberation. For example, discussion topics have included the hours of operations for the public counter, process coordination between engineering review (also known as technical document review) and building permit review, and opportunities to enhance the city’s website and development tracking software to improve public access to information involving the status of projects.

Basic city operations and services constitute a significant portion of resource allocation citywide. It is the organization’s work ethic that there is always room to improve service delivery. City staff has found it beneficial to actively engage customers in order to share information about what is being done to improve services and better understand what customers think about proposed changes.

In general, past meeting agendas have covered topics related to:

- Summaries of city revenues and expenditures;
- Summaries of city permit activity levels;
- Updates on recent city initiatives and work programs;
- City staffing updates; and
- Customer feedback about opportunities for improvements to city business processes, including opportunities to incorporate customer service enhancements as part of the city's major investment in replacing its land management software, LandLink.

The most recent P&DS Advisors meeting was held on Oct. 22, 2014 and included updates on the 2015 Budget process and the Oct. 14, 2014 joint study session between the City Council and the Planning Board (regarding planning issues and the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan).

[See a summary of the P&DS Advisor Group meetings from 2006 through 2014.](#)

Although no one has been turned away from past meetings, they have not been publicly noticed on the city calendar.

NEXT STEPS

Future actions related to the P&DS Advisor Group will be determined based upon City Council feedback and discussion on February 3.

For more information on the P&DS Advisor Group, visit <https://bouldercolorado.gov/plan-develop/pds-advisors>. This site includes examples of when Council has been informed of this group and the input it provided on particular topics.