



April 2, 2008

To: The Mayor and City Council
From: Phil Nelson, City Manager
Subject: Zucker Report Implementation Plan

On February 4, 2008, the Council received a report and presentation by the Zucker Group concerning City of Troy development processes. The report noted 102 recommendations for improvement. Broken down by priority type, there were 20 Priority 1; 56 Priority 2; and 26 Priority 3 recommendations.

From the City Manager's point of view, the three main areas of focus will include:

- Enhanced customer service and response
- Information Technology and how we can use computers to improve performance and accessibility by the public
- Making the various departments that are under the umbrella of community development come as close as possible to being self-sufficient in terms of revenues to cover expenses

Enhanced Customer Service

When plans are submitted through the review and permitting process, the normal routine is route the plans to the various inspectors, engineering, the Fire Department and other related divisions. While the review process might take three to four weeks, in actuality, staff time in reviewing the plans is between 8 and 10 hours. The difference between the permitting process and actual staff time reviewing plans and relevant documents is now referred to as Lost Opportunity Time. Staff is looking to reduce lost opportunity time as well as continue to upgrade customer service in all Service Bureaus.

Process Improvement: Upon Council approval, funds will be appropriated to provide sufficient computer and technological equipment to accept plans in digital form.

Instead of passing paper plans from one desk to the next, and one department to the other, plans will be shared digitally so that review can be reduced by one-third the “normal” time.

We will also be creating “productivity centers” by bringing the right people to the table at the right time. As example, representatives from various Service Bureaus will have a space to exchange ideas, innovate and create solutions to process related problems. In essence, a planner, engineer, firefighter, police officer, park and recreation representative and a finance person will go to the “productivity center” to identify common challenges and to develop responses and answers to meet and overcome those challenges.

Staff will also implement “Development Teams” whereby representatives from the various Service Bureaus will meet with developers in a group setting and explain the different elements of the development process. As example, the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analyst will build layered maps of zoning, utility, drainage and other information. Code enforcement staff will detail what steps the development will need to follow. We will also have tax information, permit costs and other relevant information that the developer might need. When the developer leaves the meeting, he/she will have a CD of all maps and information that was presented at the meeting. Developers will also have a single point of contact who will lead them through the development processes.

As an additional part of the process, we will also have information available for new or relocating employees that will help with “trailing families” such as educational opportunities, quality of life venues, or, in essence what there is to do in Troy. So that employers know that we are striving to enhance the idea of a complete community, it is staff’s idea to include a representative from the Troy School District at the table to be able to answer any questions about schools and educational opportunities that might arise.

Staff has also instituted Team Troy, comprised of representatives from all of the primary customer service departments. Their task has been to develop communications tools to set “quality standards” for customer service provision. Departmental representatives on the team are the first line employees that have the most public contact. When the first phase of the teamwork is completed, all departments will have protocol for customer services.

Staff recently implemented the Customer Solutions Desk. While this is a scaled down version of the original "Welcome Center" concept, the Solutions Coordinator will be the direct contact for citizen inquiries. The Customer Solutions Desk will also identify complaint "trends" using available software and will work with the appropriate Service Bureau(s) to develop solutions to the problems. The Coordinator has developed a network of employees that can provide rapid response to questions. The primary goal is to provide a response to questions that take more than normal answers within a 24 hour period.

Process Improvement

Staff will begin implementation of improvement recommendations in concert with available training times and available funding for additional computer hardware. The IT Director has developed cost estimates to properly furnish development elements of the various Service Bureaus with technological equipment. Again, the primary purpose of expanding technological capabilities is to reduce the time spent on plan review and the permitting process. Cost estimates call for expenditures for new hardware of \$114,600, and \$172,135 in ongoing annual costs.

Many of the new processes involved in customer service will also be utilized in this section of process improvement. We will mandate the use of existing software for tracking processes and making improvements where and when possible.

The Council recently approved fee increases for plan review and building permit processes. While the fees will not cover the entire margin between revenues and expenditures, the additional fee money will be used to acquire equipment and other needs that will make the departments more effective and efficient. Fee structures will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that fees pay a substantial portion of the operating costs of building permit issuance, plan review and inspection costs. It is staff's intention to cover as much of the departmental costs with fees and productivity increases so that the city-at-large does not have to subsidize operational costs of the applicable departments.

Process Improvement

Process improvements involving regaining some of the lost opportunity time will allow personnel in all permit and inspection services to develop new cost cutting measures, and to be cross-trained to do other functions, and to provide assistance in new and changing work tasks.

Management staff will also be instituting new performance based outcomes and will monitor the way business is done in terms of how the outcomes are being met. While staff anticipates the work loads to increase significantly with new construction of the Big Beaver Corridor, we will also look at what happens if we don't see large scale development and make decisions as to staff levels based on actual work load and other performance measures.

Conclusions:

The City of Troy is at a crossroads in terms of continued economic viability. The primary source of increased revenues will be in the form of redevelopment of land adjacent to several key arterials. Staff will be prepared to accommodate development in all possible ways assuming the development plans are within City and State of Michigan adopted codes. Staff will work with applicants, developers and contractors to ensure the highest quality development with the highest level of customer service, professionalism and quality team plan review.

The Zucker Report gave support to the fact that staff does work to help people succeed, and we accept the report's findings with the note that we can and will continue to improve our processes and will continue to change to meet the changing styles and needs of development.