

PIERCE COUNTY AUDIT - JUNE 2005 REPORT BY ZUCKER SYSTEMS

A. OVERVIEW

This report is based on a review of the June 6 Fast Forward report, Aleshire's memo for the June 9 meeting and the March 2005 King County Council report..

B. JUNE 6, 2005 FAST FORWARD REPORT

1. Backlog and Applications Per Month

As expected the overall backlog remains the same as in April. Unless activity picks up, the backlog should begin to fall in next months report.

2. RFP's

Progress continues to be made. The goal should be to push ahead and have all of these completed by the next reporting period.

3. Building Division Plans Examiners

With two staff out for medical procedures the Building Division should add to the amount of work being given to the outside plan reviewers.

4. Current Planning Vacancies

We don't have all the details on the process, but it appears that efforts should be made to accelerate this recruitment and the filling of these three positions.

5. List Of Completed Items

The report indicated that declaring permits complete on acceptance of applications, Recommendation 16. However, given the continued long counter wait times we wonder if the full intent of this recommendation has been implemented. The intent was to cut down the amount of time at intake by simplifying the "complete" finding.

6. Phone Calls

Our comments in the May report are repeated here.

Although we recognize the difficulty of returning phone calls the same day; we continue to feel progress needs to be made on this item. Staff often complains that returning phone calls the same day keeps them from working on the backlog. However, unless the calls are never returned, the same amount of time is consumed if the calls are answered the same day or a day or two later. The customer service aspect of returning calls the same day received is extremely important.

7. Additional Space and Lobby Functionality

Please forward this report to us when it is available.

8. Building Division

It is good to see the backlog dropping, even with the staff reduction.

9. **Development Engineering**

It is good to see the backlog continues to drop.

10. **Resource Management**

We were surprised to see the Resource Management backlog rising so fast. During our April interviews, management led us to believe that solving this backlog was going to be much easier than the rest of the backlogs. We assume this will begin to drop in the next reporting period. Otherwise, management should give extra attention to how to address this issue.

11. **Counter Wait Times**

Splitting the data into two categories is helpful. However, the report continues to use averages that masks too much data. We hope that in future reports our prior recommendation can be implemented using the percent served in 60 minutes, 120 minutes, etc.

We continue to find it hard to understand why so little attention is being given to solving the counter situation. We understand why this is not a concern to the industry but the industry is only one part of the customer base for PALS.

We continue to believe that there is a potential for a major unfortunate customer blow up under this system.

During our April visit we were told that a new phone system was to be installed to set appointments for the early visitors. Is this system in operation?

C. June 9th Meeting

The July 5th report to the Council is an important part of our contract. We would hope that it will include response to our April, May and June reviews.

D. FEE STRUCTURE IMPLEMENTATION REPORT, KING COUNTY

Our comments on this report as related to Pierce County include:

- The project manager approach is excellent and is consistent with our recommendations in the audit. This approach can, but does not need to include, the variable fees.
- We generally support development fees covering full costs. Any excess revenue should be set aside for use of the development related functions.
- A reserve account should be established. We generally believe it should build to an amount equal to nine months of the development related budgets. At that time if revenue continues to exceed expenditures, fees should be reduced.
- For most permits we favor fixed, rather than variable fees. Variable fees might be used for extremely large or complex projects.