

Building Department Budget Discussion Document

The purpose of the Building Department is to ensure a safe built environment to protect the citizens and visitors of Alexandria.

Building Department (Mike and Lynn) – Primary Functions:

Consultation	25% of time	2 employees x 2,000 hrs/yr x .25 = 1,000 hrs/yr
Plan Review	25% of time	2 employees x 2,000 hrs/yr x .25 = 1,000 hrs/yr
Site Inspection	25% of time	2 employees x 2,000 hrs/yr x .25 = 1,000 hrs/yr
Public Nuisance	10% of time	2 employees x 2,000 hrs/yr x .10 = 400 hrs/yr
Construction Stormwater	10% of time	2 employees x 2,000 hrs/yr x .10 = 400 hrs/yr
Contractor Education	5% of time	2 employees x 2,000 hrs/yr x .05 = 200 hrs/yr
	100%	4,000 hrs/yr

Others Involved

Brenda	45% of her time	2,000 hrs/yr x .40 = 1000 hrs/yr
Julie	20% of her time	2,000 hrs/yr x .20 = 400 hrs/yr
Mike W	15% of his time	2,000 hrs/yr x .10 = 200 hrs/yr
Lori	5% of her time	2,000 hrs/yr x .5 = 200 hrs/yr

The Building Department is an extremely small department with a very large, technically complex workload. Additional staff will be needed if the City wishes to maintain the high level of service that the Building Department staff currently provide. Technology is great, but technology can't do client consultations, plan reviews, field inspections or nuisance complaint investigation. From 1999 until Building Official, Bruce Jaspersen's retirement in 2012, the Building Department had three inspectors. Since 2012, the Building Department has been down one inspector. Construction remains strong.

Recommendations:

Specialty Mechanical/Plumbing Inspector:

With the amount of industry we have in Alexandria, the mechanical installations we must inspect are very complex, often times beyond our expertise. It is for this reason that I recommend hiring a specialty mechanical/plumbing inspector in the near future. This individual needs to have several years of field

experience in the installation and/or inspection of commercial/industrial HVAC. In talking with some colleagues, they felt that this type of position may be attractive to a late 40's-mid-50's contractor whose body is wearing out from years in the field. They also thought we may be able to attract an inspector from the metro area who is looking to work their last 10-years in Alexandria and retire up here. With the shortage of tradespeople, and the wages paid them due to that shortage, we will have to investigate what a reasonable salary range may be. One individual suggested \$65,000 as a starting point. It would be nice to have this person in place by the start of next construction season.

Nuisance Complaints:

The problem with the Building Department handling nuisance complaints is timing. Nuisance complaints are at their peak during peak construction season; spring/summer. It can be difficult to manage them both in a timely manner. A part time individual who would be comfortable and competent in dealing with these situations would be beneficial. Finding the right person for this position may be difficult, as it is can be confrontational and sometimes a bit unnerving. I became acquainted with an early to mid-50's retired police officer while he was building a new home up here. Recently he asked whether the Building Department needed any help during the summer. He said that he was limited to making less than \$18,000/yr so that it would not affect his PERA. As a retired police officer, he would have all of the necessary people and organizational skills this position would require. This might be the right fit for us at this time. It would be nice to have a person in place by next March for this position.

Other Expenses:

Stormwater Inspection –

This is always an unknown as it is dependent upon how much construction we have, how long the project takes, how much rain we have and how many problems occur. Our past history shows that we can plan on approximately \$1,500 per single-family residence and between \$2,000 and \$3,000 for commercial projects, with some exceptional situations running over \$5,000. Although it is difficult to put a budget number to, the costs of this inspection work is always covered by the cost of the permit/plan review fee.

Code Adoption - It is anticipated the State of Minnesota will be adopting a new Building Code in 2020. If this actually occurs, we will have to purchase four sets of code books and associated commentaries. The cost of these books will likely run around \$2,500.

On the Horizon.....

With most designers creating construction documents electronically, there is an increasing demand and efficiencies associated with electronic plan review. This is something we may want to consider moving to within the next five years. This may be an opportunity to store all of the plans submitted electronically and be readily available to City Hall staff, ALP and the Fire Department, and others.