

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 & 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.
Stormwater	10% of time	2 employees x 2,000 hrs./yr. x .10 = 400 hrs./yr.
<u>Contractor Education</u>	<u>5% of time</u>	<u>2 employees x 2,000 hrs./yr. x .05 = 200 hrs./yr.</u>
	100% of time	4,000 hrs./yr.

Others Involved

Brenda	50% of her time	2,000 hrs./yr. x .45 = 900 hrs./yr.
Julie	20% of her time	2,000 hrs./yr. x .20 = 400 hrs./yr.
Mike Weber	15% of his time	2,000 hrs./yr. x .15 = 300 hrs./yr.
Amy	5% of her time	2,000 hrs./yr. x .05 = 100 hrs./yr.
Steve**	100% of his time	2,000 hrs./yr. x 1 = 2,000 hrs./yr.

** Steve is in the final year of the 2-year MN DLI Building Official Trainee Program. This program provides \$65,000 annually to participating municipalities to assist with associated costs. Of the 2,000 hours worked annually, 800 hours (40%) are spent on site inspection. Steve has taken the lead on handling nuisance complaints and spends approximately 400 hours annually (20%) working on this task. Steve spends approximately 200 hours (10%) of his time dealing with construction stormwater management issues. Steve spends 300 hours (15%) of his time working on plan review and permit issuance, with the remaining 300 hours (15%) attending educational offerings and studying code.

The Building Department is an extremely small department with a very large and technically complex workload. Additional fulltime staff will be needed if the City wishes to maintain the high level of service that Building Department staff currently provide. Keeping up with the demands

presented by the sustained strong growth has been challenging for Building Department staff. The Building Official Trainee program has proven to be very beneficial to the Department, as the addition of Steve has made the workload more manageable. As Steve continues to gain knowledge, experience and confidence, his value to the City will only increase.

Recommendations:

Third Building Inspector

The 2-year, \$130,000 Building Official Trainee (BOT) grant period will end December 31, 2022. The Building Department has been down one full time inspector since 2012, when Bruce Jaspersen retired. Chronically running short-staffed is problematic for many reasons and is not sustainable. The addition of Steve Zabel through the (BOT) program has been extremely helpful in spreading out Building Department workload.

I would propose that the City budget for making this position fulltime upon completion of the BOT grant period.

Specialty Mechanical/Plumbing Inspector

With the amount of industry we have in Alexandria, the mechanical installations we must inspect can be very complex, often times beyond our expertise. It is for this reason that I recommend hiring a specialty mechanical/plumbing inspector in the next two years. This individual needs to have several years of field experience in the installation of commercial/industrial HVAC and plumbing systems. Finding the right person for this position will be very difficult, especially in light of the tradespeople shortage, other opportunities available and the wages being paid.

I would propose that we start budgeting for this position now, so that we would be in position to hire the right person, should they become available.

Electronic Plan Submittal and Plan Review

With most designers creating construction documents electronically, there is an increasing demand for, and efficiencies associated with, electronic plan submittal and review. Exploration of available technology was planned to be completed in 2021. This did not happen, but we have not given up. I look to have this information by year end 2022 and will have a recommendation by mid-year 2023. It would be great to have this new technology in place in 2024.

Electronic Record Storage of Building Department Files

As building permit submittals and their associated correspondence are getting more voluminous all of the time, we will soon run out of room to store these documents. Storage is only part of the problem. Retrieval is the other part. After limited exploration of this project, it became clear that this needs to be an entire City effort. The Building Department will not take the lead role on

this project, but will assist as requested. In the interim, Building Department staff has found new efficiencies with the LOGIS system that allow us to attach smaller electronic files to the building permit.

Fourth Building Inspector

It sounds like due to the success of the MN Department of Labor and Industry's BOT grant program, they will be offering another. The application period will likely occur late summer, with the award date mid fall. This will be a competitive application process. If the City should be successful, the grant period would run from January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2024. The details have not yet been released. The BOT program has been beneficial for both the City and Steve. Not only has it allowed us to have another person to share the workload, it has also allowed us to train Steve in the way we want him to perform. Perhaps just as important is that we have been able to give back to the profession by training the next generation of code official. It has been a win-win for everyone involved. And not to brag, but we have done a very good job of meeting the program requirements set forth by the MN DLI.

I would propose that if MN DLI does indeed offer this opportunity again, the City submit an application. If we should be successful, at a minimum, we would have another person to share the workload for two years, as well as add another competent and confident code official to the profession. It's also possible that this person could become part of the Building Department's plan for succession as retirement(s) come up.

Other Expenses:

Stormwater Inspection Costs-

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 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 projects exceeding \$5,000. Although it is near impossible to put a budget number to, the costs of this inspection work is generally covered by the cost of the permit/plan review fee.

LOGIS (PIMS) Permitting and Inspection System Costs –

The cost of this service continues to increase, however the value of what PIMS provides in terms of efficiency, is well worth it. It's anticipated this service will cost approximately \$2,500 per month, with an additional annual fee for development. On a per-permit basis, LOGIS costs about \$25 per permit. This is quite a value when one considers the online permitting features, electronic field inspection tracking, electronic scheduling and the report building capabilities.