

# Inspections Small Group Meeting Notes | 2015

## November 4, 2015, 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. BC City Hall

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**Present:** Amanda Lanker, Hans Stark, Steve Bueller, Laura Otte, Archie Crooks, Joe Newman, Marcie Gillette, Talia Champlin, Deb Owens,

### “Wins”

- Archie – good meeting with Marcie regarding invoicing (incorporate info into invoice regarding permit # to better accommodate contractor processing and efficiency) and an inspection issue (re-inspection with inspector after initial inspection), feel confident that we’re on the right track and think it’s going in the right direction, city attitude has been adversarial in past and now have better working relationship to accomplish things together
- Talia- was working with client interested in a house on vacant/abandoned list, buyer needed to move in before closing, buyer called city, city said no problem and let them move in.
- Have received positive, helpful response from city. Still need to make sure city is consistent in providing reasoning in writing for why issues are arising so that customers know why
- Still some issues that need to be worked out – Archie shared information about a situation where an inspector identified a different issue that needed to be fixed that was outside the work of the permit. It was unclear whether the inspector thought the issue was a health, safety and welfare issue or something else. Marcie will work with Archie to follow-up.

### Action Updates from Last Meeting

The group reviewed actions from the last meeting.

- Further review documents provided by Marcie, send feedback electronically to the whole group
  - Vacant/Abandoned Ordinance – some changes were fantastic, some thought expanding the ordinance to cover commercial might not be a good idea. Abandoned properties are a problem, vacant properties are a decision. It was recommended to remove “vacant” from the title. Turning off utilities shouldn’t trigger monitoring. It was noted that in the IPMC grandfathering is embedded. The IPMC should be communicated to building owners and potential impact considered.

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- Look into the reasoning at the State level that delays issuance of permits (i.e. requiring that a Trade Inspector sign permit applications prior to issuance)
  - According to the state code, there is no legal way to have anyone else sign off on permits other than inspectors. City currently has a 2 day turn around for permits but is open to finding a way to turn them around quicker. The group would like to explore ways to expedite certain types of permits like the process that's currently in place for roof/siding permits. Could this also apply to other permits like water heater, furnace replacement, etc.? Members were asked to form a sub-group that could look at the law/code and a process for expediting specific permits. Steve and Archie volunteered to be a part of the sub-group. It was noted that some group members were not present and we should ask them if they want to be a part of the sub-group too.
- Compile a list of communities that have adopted a Vacant and Abandoned Ordinance
  - Marcie distributed info on communities with population indicated.
- Work with City Clerk to streamline AMSA Construction Board of Appeals process
  - Working to write a written process with Vicki
- Further prepare for December 1 presentation to commission
  - It seems that most of the City Commission candidates voiced a positive concern about our group and what we are trying to accomplish together as they were campaigning. If we want the Commission and the community to be supportive, we need to keep them informed about our progress. The community needs to hear about and see the wins that are happening. It's important the community see the pieces coming together and the progress being made. The city is listening and making changes.
  - It was noted that there is some inconsistency among the group. Some are saying that there hasn't been an opportunity for all small group members to provide input while others are saying that there has been ample time to review and provide input. We need to find a happy medium in how we work together to make sure we're moving forward together.
  - It was recommended that the facilitators make the presentation to the Commission on the group's behalf to ensure a neutral position. It should incorporate the information Annie and Talia put together previously. Things that could be presented are: hiring the Chief Building Official, revisions to the vacant and abandoned ordinance, changing processes like the one Archie brought up for wins (putting permit numbers on invoices to contractors rather than parcel numbers), etc.
  - The Commission presentation could be the start of communication with the community via press releases, video clips, quotes, information in water bills, etc.

- It was decided that group members should share stories and/or testimonials about whatever you think the commission/community should hear about this process, actions taken, etc. Please share what you think should be lifted up and is valuable thus far in this process. You could share a story, why this process feels different, why you're involved in the process, etc. The group should send the quotes/testimonials to the entire group to ensure transparency and communication. A handout with this information could be distributed to the Commission/community during the Commission presentation.
- It was decided that we should try to get together one more time before our next small group meeting. November 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> seemed to make the most sense for everyone. A doodle poll will be sent out to confirm the date and time.

### Review Draft Action Plan

Marcie reviewed action plan distributed to the group. The action plan was created to help the group keep track of what we've accomplished throughout this process and what we hope to accomplish going forward. Although the process was prompted a year ago and the first conversation happened in January 2015, our group has only been meeting for about six months. We'll use this document to track our progress and keep us on task.

Please give feedback to Marcie if anything is missing or if you have questions. It was recommended that the city's customer service training be added. This document will be given to Commissioners at the presentation, posted on the city's website and emailed to the larger group involved in the conversations.

### Chief Building Official Update

Six external and two internal candidates applied. Three candidates didn't meet the minimum qualifications. One candidate withdrew. One candidate's license lapsed and has since submitted a request for reinstatement with state. One interview was conducted last week. Because of the low interest, a mailing will go out to those individuals registered with the state to notify them of the job posting and hopefully, encourage interest. Joe, the City Manager, and HR staff person and Marcie sit on the interview panel. The first individual interviewed was a viable candidate. He had the skills, worked in both small and large communities and was personable. Additional interviews have been scheduled. The group will be updated at the next meeting.

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### Commission Presentation

Covered under “Action Updates from Last Meeting” above.

### Summary of Commitments

- If anyone else from the group is interested in joining the sub-group to could look at the law/code and a process for expediting specific permits, please notify Steve, Archie and Marcie.
- Group members should review the action plan document and provide suggestions/feedback to Marcie.
- A doodle poll will be sent out to the group to determine the best time to meet (either on the 23<sup>rd</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup>) to work on the Commission presentation.
- Group members to provide quotes, stories of progress and individual photos (arrangements for photos to be taken are available by contacting Jessica Vanderkolk as directed in email) by **next Friday, November 20.**

### Next Meeting

**Tuesday 11/24 3pm in Conference Room 302A to finalize work on December 1 Commission Presentation**

**Wednesday, December 2nd from 2:00 – 3:30 pm, City Hall Conference Room 302A – debrief presentation, determine next steps for the group**

**(Monthly meetings are held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month from 2-3:30 p.m.)**

### Our Shared Commitments:

1. **Transparency-** as agreed upon in the previous meeting, the small group would like to continue making notes and documents publicly accessible
2. **Confidentiality-** the group feels it is important to be mindful of how matters are discussed, particularly identifying staff or partners by name and the implications of attribution of comments
3. **Responsibility to be Advocates and Champions-** believing in Battle Creek, committing to sharing positive stories of the progress the group has made, and agreeing to serve as helpful resource in the community when people or partners the group encounters expresses a concern or negative comment is important to the group.