

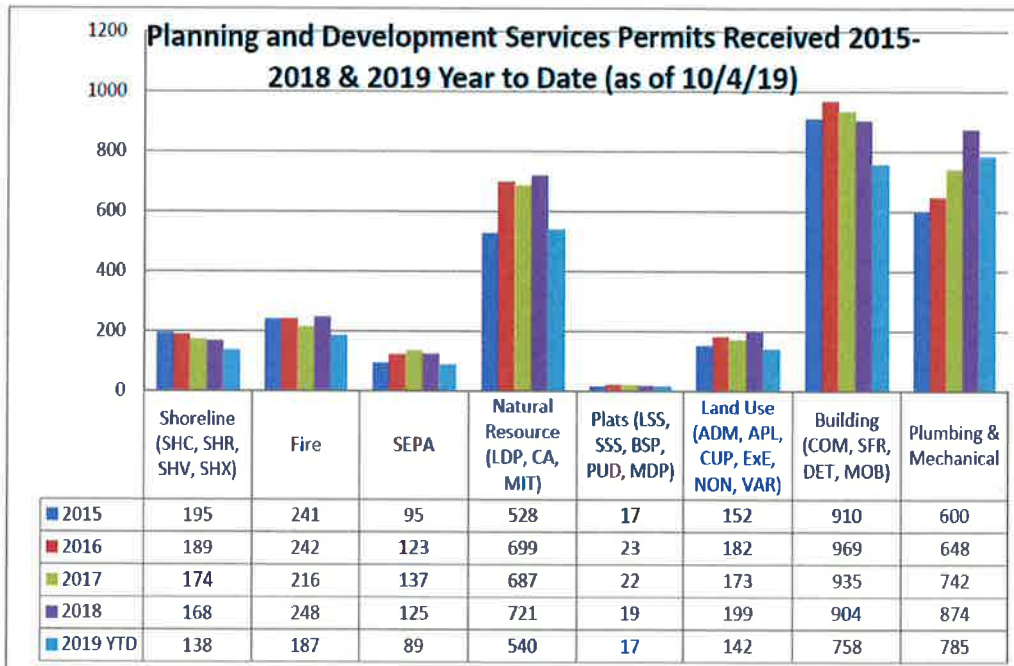
Planning & Development Services Director's Update

County Council Planning & Development Committee—October 22, 2019

General Applications/Permitting Status Highlights

Generally our land use permit numbers are fairly consistent with the last couple of years, except we have seen a larger number of pre-application meeting requests. We have received 77 pre-application meeting requests to date and last year at this time we had received 58. These requests are for all types of development including subdivisions, conditional use permits, variances, commercial development and shoreline permits.

Year to date, our building permit numbers are on par compared to last year, but with slightly fewer large commercial project permits than this time last year. However, we also have some significant urban commercial projects pending in the permit pipeline.



Customer Service Improvement Highlights

We completed our PDS Customer Service Plan as part of the Executive's overall customer service improvement initiative. That plan identifies barriers to improving customer service and strategies to overcome those barriers. Coming up with the plan was an internal staff-driven process and staff self-identified their challenges to providing better customer service and ways we could overcome those challenges. So overall it was a very beneficial process to go through and there was staff buy-in both to acknowledging our challenges and to identify solutions that work for best for staff and our customers.

Two customer service improvement strategies in particular we are already working on include:

1. New EnerGov electronic permit tracking system. Will improve our ability to manage and improve permitting review work flows and include a public-facing web portal so customers can also see the status of their permit applications. Currently entering the Verification & System Acceptance phase of the project—essentially the “beta system” testing phase of the project. Key staff from PDS, Public Works and Health attended training the first two weeks of October and will be testing the system over the next several months to work out the kinks. There are more than 100 different permit path case types to be tested. So it is a time-intensive process. End user training will begin early next year for both staff and the public. Our tentative “Go Live” date is set for late March/April next year.
2. Development of two new Natural Resource Division Guidance Manuals. We intend to have completed and operational before the end of the year.
 - The first is a Single Family Residential (SFR) Mitigation Manual for single family landowners to create a mitigation plan for up to 1,000 square feet of critical area buffer impacts from their development. This guide will save landowners time and money from having to hire consultants and go through a longer mitigation plan approval process for relatively minor impacts that they can do themselves through plantings with the help of the mitigation manual.
 - The second is a new Natural Resource Division Staff Operations Manual. The intent of this is to establish a clear set of procedures for all NR staff to follow as part of critical area permitting review process. Intent is to improve communication between staff and our customers and ensure more consistent responses to customer inquiries among and between different staff. Should also reduce the rate of Notices of Additional Requirements (NOARs) to customers.

Major Planning Project Highlights

- **Green Apple Renewable Fuels Project:** The applicant has been working with the County and Ecology to assess permit options for a new facility designed to process fats, oils and grease feedstocks into renewable diesel fuel. The project will be located adjacent to the existing Phillips 66 site in the Cherry Point Urban Growth Area. The County will be SEPA co-lead with Ecology and will issue a formal request to the public and agencies for Pre-Threshold Consultation on possible environmental impacts on October 23, 2019. The comment period for consultation will run through November 6, 2019. Ecology and the County will then review those comments and jointly issue a SEPA threshold determination after that.
- **Governors Point Long Plat/Development Agreement:** The County and the applicant have been working on a 16 lot residential subdivision on Governors Point. Approximately 98 acres of the site will be owned and operated by the Whatcom Land Trust. The City of Bellingham has agreed to provide water to the site contingent on the donation of land to the Land Trust. This will require a long subdivision and development agreement approval that will likely come before Council in the next couple of months.

Permit Center Highlights

Here are a few “larger” permitting projects we have received in 2019:

- **New 24,000 sf. Warehouse**—West Bakerview—Bellingham UGA— Issued.
- **Alderwood Elementary School Replacement**—Bellingham UGA – In review/Out for Public Comment.
- **Middle Fork Nooksack Diversion Project** – City of Bellingham Fish Passage/Restoration – NOAR.
- **Mt. Baker High School Gym Renovation** – Issued.
- **P66 Refinery ~25,000 square foot Emergency Operations Center Building** – In review.
- **P66 Refinery International Maritime Organization (IMO) Marine Fuel Storage Tanks** – SEPA Appeal.
- **Two ~10,000 square foot warehouse buildings**— Ferndale UGA— In review.

Pipeline projects (Pre-application meeting held):

- Green Apple REG – Renewable Diesel Project
- Bellingham International Airport—~110,000 square feet of New Hanger Space

Legislative Docket Initiatives

- **Shoreline Master Plan Update** – Staff and our consultant has been working on the scope of work approved by Council. The plan is to have draft updated regulations out for public review and comment at public open houses in January 2020, then to Planning Commission in February and Council in April/May. The deadline for Council approval is June 2020).
- **Buildable Lands Program** (new pass-through grants from Commerce in place; consultant in-place and engaged and city/county planner group engaged on preparing updated methodology. Deadline for Council approval is June 2021).
- **Proposed Amendments to WCC 20.72 (Point Roberts Special District) by the Point Roberts Citizen Advisory Committee** – Staff has been working with the PRCAC on their proposed amendments to 20.72. They will be forwarded to the Planning Commission and County Council upon the PRCAC finalizing its proposal.
- **Code Enforcement Amendments** – Staff has been working on developing a new chapter of the WCC regarding code enforcement, which also requires amendments to several other sections of the code. This should be getting to the Planning Commission this winter.
- **Miscellaneous Code Amendments** – Staff has been working on 25 miscellaneous amendments to Titles 12, 16, 20, 21, and 22 to clarify code, fix inconsistencies and grammar, and, this year, modify several policies, including an already docketed item to address boundary line adjustment regulations. We anticipate taking it to the Planning Commission this winter and to Council in 2020 for public hearing and adoption.
- **Surface Mining Regulation Amendments** – Staff has been working on processing three different and distinct docketed surface mining related proposed policy and code amendments through the Surface Mining Advisory Committee.
- **Critical Areas Ordinance Appeal** – As you know, the Farm Bureau appealed our revised CAO, specifically regarding the CPAL program. Staff has been meeting with the appellants consistently throughout the year and is close to having an agreed upon strategy for resolving the appeal.

- **Cherry Point Fossil Fuel Amendments** –As you know, the Council approved Resolution 2019-037 on August 7, 2019 forwarding the proposed amendments to the Planning Commission for review.

- The Planning Commission hosted a Town Hall meeting on *September 12, 2019* to listen to public comments on the proposal. We had comment from over 150 folks on the proposed amendments.
- The Planning Commission also held a work session on *September 26, 2019* to consider the proposal, including discussion with a representative of Cascadia Law Group. At this meeting, the Planning Commission approved a motion requesting the Planning and Development Services Department to meet with industry representatives to obtain input. PDS has had productive discussions with industry.
- The Planning Commission met again on *October 10, 2019* at which time it heard from industry representatives, environmental group representatives, and the Northwest Clean Air Agency. The Commission reached consensus at this meeting to delete the proposed GHG mitigation requirements for renewable fuel facilities that reduce lifecycle GHG emissions.
- Next Planning Commission work session is scheduled for this Thursday, *October 24, 2019* to continue their deliberations.

We've had some really good dialogue with the Commission, industry, and environmental stakeholders as part of the public review process. We have identified some options to the Commission about how to go about making their recommendations back to Council and they are working through those as we move forward.

- **Coming Next Year:** Telecommunications code update to address new 5G technology, building code amendments to reduce need for repetitive building permit renewals and occupancy approvals, sign code update, etc.