
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MEMORANDUM

TO: DIANE PELLETIER, FINANCE DIRECTOR
FROM: MICHAEL MAYS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
SUBJECT: BUILDING OFFICIAL POSITION EVALUATION
DATE: DECEMBER 30, 2020

Issue:

The city currently uses a third-party firm (PREI) to provide building official services. Mark Palm, principal of PREI, has announced that he plans to terminate services with the city at the end of FY20-21. The department is evaluating two options for his replacement:

- Hire a full-time building official.
- Select a third-party building inspection firm to provide those services.

This memo evaluates both alternatives, keeping in mind three primary department objectives:

- Being fiscally responsible.
- Ensuring that construction in the community complies with local ordinances.
- Continued improvement in customer service experience through an efficient building permit process.

Each option is evaluated below with staff's recommendation.

Background:

Per NRS 278.570, if a local municipality desires to review building permits and enforce local building codes, it must establish and fill a building official position. This individual may either be a city position or through the utilization of a third-party consultant. The person filling the position must comply with the requirements for certification and continuing education established pursuant to NRS 278.577.

Prior to 2017, the city had a full-time building official. With that person's departure, the city entered into an agreement in February 2017 for PREI to provide those services at approximately 32 hours per week. Mark Palm, principal of PREI, serves as the city building official. The duties of the building official include the following (a more comprehensive list is provided in the job description as Attachment 1):

- Meets with contractors, developers, and residents to discuss building code requirements.
- Ensures that construction complies with local building codes.
- Manages third-party building inspection and plan review services.
- Conducts building inspections (when third-party firm is not available).
- Represents the city when attending regional building code discussions.

- Conducts plan reviews.

Historically, having the building official available in the office to answer customer questions and discuss potential projects has been beneficial to streamlining the building permit and inspection process. Therefore, staff is seeking an individual that can be available 40 hours per week to serve customers.

Financial Impact:

Based on current rates for third-party building official services (approximately \$140.00 per hour) their utilization at 40 hours per week would far exceed the cost to hire a permanent building official. Even their utilization at 20 hours per week would be comparable to the cost of a full-time permanent position. Staff has summarized the cost of each in the table below:

COST ESTIMATES	
Full-time Building official*	\$153,118
Third-Party Inspection firm 20 hrs. per week	\$145,600
Third-Party Inspection firm 40 hrs. per week	\$291,200

(* Note: Cost estimate includes full benefit costs)

Option 1: Hire a Permanent, Full-Time Building Official:

Below is an evaluation of the pros and cons of hiring a full-time permanent building official.

PROS	CONS
Least expensive option	In today’s economic climate, it may be difficult to attract qualified candidates
Would provide building permit process continuity based on community knowledge	Limited flexibility – if individual is sick or on long term disability, department would need to seek outside help for support
Provides succession planning opportunities that support CD director position	Community is making a long term commitment with a permanent position
Provides for a in house staff person to oversee third-party consultant inspection services	
Could support plan review and building inspections, which in the long run could reduce city reliance on third-party firms when time allows	
Provides greater access to customers with building permit questions	
Provides support toward customer service efforts with respect to permit processing	

Option 2: Use a Third-Party Inspection Firm to Serve as Building Official:

With this option, the department would put out a request for proposals (RFP) to third-party building inspection firms. Below is an evaluation of the pros and cons of this option.

PROS	CONS
Opportunity to take advantage of experienced individuals through a third-party firm	Most expensive option
Provides back up resources when building official designee is away on vacation, sick, or during turnover	Potential turnover with third-party staff that will not develop institutional knowledge of community and procedures
	Potential for third-party firm overseeing work of other staff from the same firm providing inspection services

Conclusion:

Based on this evaluation, the department recommends hiring a full-time building official. While today’s economy makes position recruitment more difficult, this option is more fiscally responsible and provides the greatest benefits to Boulder City citizens and contractors in the long term by providing building code guidance and improving customer service.

Because the city currently spends approximately \$100,000 annually for building official and plan review services through third-party firms, either option above will result in an increase in spending for FY21-22. However, the function is important to the department’s successful implementation of core services and is the more cost effective of the two alternatives.

Attachment:

1. Building Official Job Description

CITY OF BOULDER CITY NEVADA

CLASS TITLE: BUILDING OFFICIAL

BASIC FUNCTION:

Under the direction of the Director Community Development manages the City's combination inspection activities to enforce building codes and regulations; plan checks proposed new construction and building alterations; and advises builders and homeowners on minimum constructions and design standards. Enforce zoning ordinances as specified in the City Code.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS:

Incumbents work independently in the field and is responsible for decisions requiring technical applications. Work is subject to periodic checks, with new and exceptionally difficult situations referred to the Director Community Development.

REPRESENTATIVE DUTIES:

(It is important to note that the duties listed below are "representative only" and are not intended to cover the full range or scope of duties in this class.)

1. Manages and directs staff of the division to ensure prompt review of plans for proposed building construction or alterations, and the timely inspection of all structures being built to obtain compliance with applicable state and local laws, codes, and ordinances dealing with the construction of new buildings and the alterations and safety of existing buildings.
 2. Provides supervision and direction to inspection staff by making spot-checks in the field, reviewing and evaluating workload and staff assignment, and coordinates training.
 3. Reviews and recommends revision of City codes to maintain the building regulations that are the most up-to-date and conform with federal, state, and local requirements.
 4. Develops policies and procedures designed to improve plan checking and the zoning enforcement program including permit issuance procedures or plan checking aides including checklists and application forms.
 5. Plans and controls the utilization of time by inspection staff to reduce the amount of time spent in the office and ensures the timely and productive scheduling of inspections.
 6. Provides technical assistance and advice to architects, engineers, contractors, and homeowners on matters pertaining to building plans, construction methods, materials, procedures, and codes.
 7. Assures fiscal soundness of division by developing, monitoring, and administering division budget.
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BUILDING OFFICIAL - Continued

8. Generates monthly reports regarding building inspection activities and workload and maintains various work records related to the development of such reports.
9. Responds to and resolves complaints from citizens including investigations to determine responsibility and methods to resolve the problems.
10. Interprets and makes decisions on technical issues relating to building, plumbing, electrical, and mechanical codes, and related state and local laws and ordinances.
11. Directs the abatement of structures that fail to meet the requirements of state and local laws, ordinances, and codes.
12. Checks and analyzes new construction and building alteration plans for residential commercial, industrial buildings to ensure compliance with codes and policies; identifies deficiencies and needed
13. Provides plan checking status reports to applicants and identifies steps to expedite processing.
14. Attend meetings at the local, state, or national level as required.
15. Performs related duties as may be assigned.

KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITIES:**KNOWLEDGE OF:**

- Modern building construction methods.
- Materials, tools and equipment for residential, commercial and industrial structures.
- Hazards and safety precautions of building construction.
- Stages of construction when code violations and construction defects may be more readily observed and detected.
- Adopted International Building Code, Uniform or International Plumbing Code, International Mechanical Code and National Electrical Code.
- City ordinances and regulations relating to building construction
- Principles of administration and management.

ABILITY TO:

- Provide technical supervision and training to division staff.
 - Checks building construction computations made by architects and engineers.
 - Read and interpret plans, diagrams, specifications and blueprints and compare them with actual construction in progress.
 - Detect poor workmanship, inferior materials, hazards from fire or collapse and deviation from plans.
 - Work courteously and effectively with those contacted during work.
 - Interpret and enforce applicable codes and City ordinances and regulations relating to building construction.
 - Maintain building inspection records.
 - Apply technical knowledge of building trades work and use sound inspection methods.
 - Communicate effectively in verbal and written forms
 - Schedule and coordinate own workload and work independently.
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BUILDING OFFICIAL - Continued
EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE:

Any combination equivalent to:

Graduation from college with Bachelors Degree in civil engineering or a related field and five years of progressively responsible experience in combination inspection including two year at a supervisory level.

LICENSES:

Valid Nevada Driver's License.

Certification as an International Code Council (ICC) Combination Inspector, International Code Council (ICC) Plans Examiner, and Council of American Building Officials (CABO) Building Official.

WORK DIRECTION, LEAD AND SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES:

Supervision of Inspection Staff, Code Enforcement Officer, and related clerical staff.

PHYSICAL EFFORT:

Performs physically demanding work including bending, stooping, climbing and reaching.

CONTACTS:

- Members of the public
- Contractors, architects, homeowners, owner builders
- Co-workers
- Staff from other City departments

WORKING CONDITIONS:

Subject to adverse weather conditions and to the hazards involved in working in and around construction sites.

NOTE: THIS CLASS IS EXEMPT UNDER FLSA PROVISIONS.

The City of Boulder City is an Equal Opportunity Employer. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the City will provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals. The City of Boulder City encourages both incumbents and individuals who have been offered employment to discuss potential accommodations with the employer.

