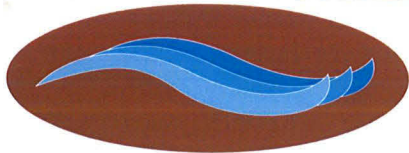


WEST MULTNOMAH



SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

184624

May 5, 2011

City of Portland

City Council

1900 SW 4th Avenue

Portland, OR 97201

Re: BDS Site Inspection Program

AUDITOR 05/20/11 PM12:27

Dear Mayor and City Council:

As a steward of watershed health and restoration, the West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District (WMSWCD) spends significant time and resources on projects designed to improve our watershed. Our efforts not only improve fish and wildlife habitat, but also reduce negative storm-water impacts such as erosion.

The City of Portland designed its zoning code in part to protect watershed resources. When property owners or developers do not comply with environmental zone restrictions, the resulting negative effects of construction projects within the environmental zones often threaten to negate the private and public investment that is devoted to watershed stewardship. Enforcement of Portland's zoning code should thus be a high priority for the City.

WMSWCD strongly advocates that the Bureau of Development Services expand its site inspection program. We believe site inspection work is critical to ensure compliance with City codes, such as the newly passed Citywide Tree Project and erosion control. It is crucial for the Bureau to have adequate staff dedicated to site inspections, including inspectors who are trained specifically in environmental impacts and neighborhood livability issues, and who conduct site inspections pre-, during, and post-construction.

We believe that in order for the City of Portland to protect its public fund investment while leveraging private and volunteer resources, it must ensure that the site inspection program is fulfilling BDS's mission of promoting safety, livability, and economic vitality through the application of development codes.

Because BDS is currently fee-funded at levels that are not adequate for additional inspections, we believe that either an increase in fees to cover the higher inspection costs or a general fund allocation for adequate enforcement personnel and resources would be necessary in order to meet this obligation. We urge the City to provide BDS with adequate funding to expand its inspection program to ensure the City's compliance with environmental regulations.

Sincerely,

2701 NW VAUGHN STREET, SUITE 450 ♦ PORTLAND, OR 97210

P: 503.238.4775 ♦ F: 503.326.3942

www.wmswcd.org

RECEIVED

MAY 09 2011

Bureau of Development Services



City of

PORTLAND, OREGON

Development Review Advisory Committee

1900 SW 4th Avenue, Suite 5000
Portland, Oregon 97201
503-823-7308
FAX: 503-823-7250
TTY 503-823-6868
www.portlandonline.com/bds

May 17, 2011

Dear Mayor Adams and City Commissioners:

The City of Portland Development Review Advisory Committee (DRAC) recently voted to express its support of the Bureau of Development Services' (BDS') proposed fee increases for FY 2011-12. The DRAC membership is comprised of representatives from significant organizations involved in construction, design, development, and neighborhood associations. DRAC members have a keen interest in the outcome of policies, budgets, regulations, and procedures that affect development in the City of Portland.

While the development community generally wants to limit the costs of development review services as much as possible, the industry is generally willing to pay increased costs when they have demonstrable benefits. In this case, the proposed fee increases will help enable BDS to add staff positions that will lead to direct improvements in land use review, plan review, permitting, inspection, and enforcement services. BDS service levels are not meeting demand as a result of staff cuts made in 2009 and 2010 in response to the recession.

DRAC members respectfully request that you approve the BDS proposed fee increases to restore acceptable levels of customer service, improve the timeliness and predictability of BDS services, and support the development industry and neighborhood livability at a critical time.

Please feel free to contact me to ask questions or receive additional information. I can be reached by phone at (503) 234-2945 or carrie@worksarchitecture.net.

Sincerely,

Carrie Strickland

Development Review Advisory Committee Chair



Providing an organized voice
for small business with the
Portland City Council on policies
that impact small business.

Chair: Andrew Frazier
Frazier Hunnicutt Financial

Vice Chair: Judy Craine
Holman's Bar & Grill

Skip Newberry
Economic Development Policy
Advisor

Office of Mayor Sam Adams
1221 SW Fourth Avenue, Suite 340
Portland, OR 97204

Contact:
503.823.4572
Skip.newberry@portlandoregon.gov

March 14, 2011

To: Ross Caron
Bureau of Development Services

Commissioner Saltzman

Re: BDS' 2011 Budget/Financial Plan

To BDS/Commissioner Saltzman,

On February 9, 2011, Ross Caron of Bureau of Development Services ("BDS") presented a summary of BDS' 2011 budget to the City of Portland's Small Business Advisory Council ("SBAC"). Mr. Caron sought SBAC's endorsement on its financial plan. SBAC voted to approve the plan, but wanted to take a moment to express its reasoning to all interested.

First, SBAC is grateful for the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to BDS' budget preparation. Nicholas Drum, committee member and local attorney, sat on BDS' Budget Advisory Committee. He and many SBAC members agreed that BDS had taken substantial strides to balance its budget while still preserving its service standards. To that end, BDS should be commended. SBAC recognizes that BDS has peculiar problems, given that it is legislatively required to wear many different hats, for which there simply are not enough resources. To this end, it appears that BDS' financial plan carefully balances its obligations with its finances as it moves forward into 2011. SBAC approves this balance.

Notwithstanding this, SBAC has significant reservations about BDS' proposed fee increases. It appears that BDS plans to raise its fees approximately 8% across the board each year for the next several years in order to continue to meet its bottom line. Undoubtedly, various City agencies are responding to this economic downturn with proposed fee increases.

The City needs to know that the current level of fees required by the various agencies is already having a chilling effect on development. In this difficult market, the margins have been whittled down to razor thin levels and heightened administrative fees, no matter how valid, can make a project cost prohibitive. Members of the committee spoke with first-hand knowledge of significant building projects that were planned within the city limits, but were subsequently shelved due to bureaucratic costs. Such projects would have been a welcome relief to our state's many struggling contractors. They would have increased the value of unused real estate and fostered continued growth throughout the area. Unfortunately, they remain unrealized opportunities.

This city is already suffering from a chilling effect due to the level of fees required by the various agencies. SBAC believes that any further fee increases are imprudent. They will likely mute whatever early signs of recovery the industry is experiencing. The net result will likely be fewer projects executed in 2011 and beyond, which will, in turn, lead to less revenue for BDS. This could lead to either another round of layoffs by BDS, another round of increased fees, or both. Such results would be unfortunate.

Please understand, however, SBAC and BDS want the same thing: a booming development industry that enables BDS to meet its bottom line while still providing top of the line service. As it stands BDS' budget strikes a fine balance between its obligations and its limited resources. Accordingly, SBAC has voted, albeit tentatively, to approve this budget. In tandem with this endorsement, however, the committee urges the City to not allow its agencies to use fee increases as its primary tool in these troubled economic times. Such a strategy, while simple and seemingly effective, will only prolong our economic troubles and inflict greater harm on an industry that is already suffering significantly.

Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of BDS' financial plan. We are grateful to be a part of the conversation, and welcome any feedback that the City or BDS may have.

Thank you,

Andrew Frazier
SBAC Chair

Nick Drum
SBAC Member/BDS's Budget Advisory Com.

CC: Small Business Advisory Council
Alliance of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations
Portland Business Association