

Tacoma Permit Advisory Task Force
747 Market Street Tacoma, TMB 148
Meeting #13 – May 16, 2019, 10:00am

10:05 am: Call to order

10:05 am: Icebreaker

10:09 am: Approval of the Minutes

Michael Fast moved, Kim Nakamura seconded approval of April 11, 2019 meeting minutes. Motion passed.

10:10 am: Feedback on Permit Timelines

Staff reminded Task Force members to submit any feedback on the permit timelines discussed at the last meeting. Send feedback to Lynda, who will share it with PDS staff.

10:10 am: Staff presentation to review past work and this discussion topic

References handout 1.

About a year ago is when the Task Force had a brainstorming session at one of the first meetings and voted on the five topics that have been covered over the year. Handout one was handed out to remind the group of the context of permitting. Staff have shared over the year how they've shifted their mindset and focus from permit-centric to project-centric.

Staff very briefly reviewed the work from the last year. Shared that the work has helped build a partnership with the Task Force members. The remaining question in this round of Task Force work is for the Task Force to share their thoughts on building a partnership.

11:16 am: Culminating discussion on building a partnership

The Task Force kicked off the conversation by discussing what a partnership is.

There was conversation about the various layers of staff at the City who serve different roles, and different permit applicants. The Task Force volunteers and the staff in the room have formed a partnership, but it is not clear it extends to the front-line staff on the third floor at the City or to other permit applicants not on the Task Force. There was agreement that the progress made must extend beyond the folks in the room for Task Force meetings. There was acknowledgement that over the last six months to a year staff at the City have been empowered to resolve issues on the front line. This trend needs to continue so that there isn't just an insider way around roadblocks if you know how to contact staff beyond the front lines.

Peter Huffman responded. PDS is in a continuous improvement mode and is incrementally implementing all the things coming out of the Task Force and other spaces they use to receive feedback. A big change is the culture and communication practices that have been implemented over years. The feedback received is being pushed down to staff, but PDS is hiring new staff and it takes time to onboard them.

Continued discussion from Task Force. Some members directly go to staff “behind the counter” to solve and prevent problems. Some Task Force members intentionally go through the process from the bottom up to be able to give staff feedback on what the experience is like.

The Task Force stated that for the developers and applicants to be partners they need Task Force members to work the system as designed to acquire real world knowledge of the design and to see when something goes wrong, and then share that feedback with staff. There is also a need for front end communication from developers and applicants to make sure things are being done right.

The Task Force also discussed how to extend the partnership beyond the people in the room so other developers and permit applicants can be partners. The Task Force discussed its makeup, and whether there are other people who should join the next phase of its work. Additional items included Task Force members being ambassadors to share information and PDS staff doing “road shows” and taking a presentation to various groups to share information on permit improvements and receive feedback from the public. Concerns were raised that even after recent process improvements some developers still have trouble working with PDS. There was a sentiment that the Task Force could be used to review example cases where things went wrong and look for additional process improvements.

Identified next steps:

- Outlining a structure on how to move forward with reviewing case samples/ doing autopsies of permit applications
- Staff doing a “road show” and Task Force ambassador work to convey that Tacoma is open for business and has implemented permit process improvements
- Task Force members share feedback on who should be invited to join the Task Force with Lynda to be reviewed by the leadership team.

11:27 am: Final Comment

Jim Dugan provided an overview of next steps for the Task Force. There will be one more meeting to discuss partnerships, and then a final meeting of the current phase of the Task Force’s work to wrap up this iteration of the project.

Task Force members have a desire to continue work after this phase. Jim invites members to participate in closing out this phase. The leadership team will work with staff to prepare a white paper to share with the City Council. The full Task Force is invited to offer input on that paper when a draft is presented.

11:32 am: Adjourned