

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Iafallo
From: Richard E. Stanton, Esq., Director of Development
Dated: March 18, 2020
Re: Department Operations During Covid-19 Emergency.

Please accept this Memorandum as an Outline of a Plan, and Needs to continue to safely operate, to the extent reasonable, through the on-going public health emergency.

My Department on a daily basis does the following:

1. Oversees the Permitting Process, and Inspects Projects in the Ground
2. Intakes Complaints and Inspects of Property Conditions
3. Staffs the Planning Board for Site Plan Review Matters
4. Staffs the Zoning Board for variance issues
5. Oversees Redevelopment efforts internally, and in conjunction with other Governmental Agencies
6. Works on Procuring and Implementing Grants, and procuring consultants and vendors re same.

We have limited staff of Wanda Turner (Administrative Assistant), and Scott Hayes Code Enforcement Officer. Plans/thoughts for carrying on the above functions, while minimizing human contact between staff, and staff and public our set forth below.

1. The Permitting Process.

Building Permits are available on line. We need to upload

- a. Site Plan Applications,
- b. Zoning Applications, and
- c. SEQRA Forms, as well as a letter from myself to the Public on how to contact myself and staff by email to resolve issues.

To work optimally we will need to request architects, engineers, and the public to submit plans and applications electronically. It would be beneficial, for short and long term, to accept payments on line. My department will need to coordinate with our web administrator (Shannon Falbo), the Comptroller, Treasurer, and Planning Board, as well as the public to be able to accept and process permits which do not require zoning approval on line.

Scott will likely be able to continue to do physical inspections of construction sites with minimal human interaction, and while keeping 6 feet away from people.

Even with online and remote processing of applications we may need occasional access to the building. .. so building keys would be helpful.

The less desirable approach will be to have a drop box and pickup box near a doorway. Relying on a drop box would be slower, and require more human interaction.

My recommendation is to take the above identified steps to process permits on-line to the maximum extent possible.

2. Intake of Complaints re Property Conditions

Wanda Turner is the person who intakes complaints on Property Conditions. She should be able to access phone remotely and then be able to input them into the system so Inspectors can address.

Inspectors are not to go inside any occupied residence without adequate protective gear, and an emergency reason.

Wanda can mails out Notices of Violations if she primarily works from home, and comes in a couple ½ days. Because of Court congestion problems we will want to put out any return dates, and continue to focus on voluntarily compliance by working with people whenever possible.

Court enforcement may be slowed down significantly, and is not very desirable due to health concerns , but the majority of our matters our resolved by procuring voluntary compliance.

3. Site Plan Approvals not requiring a Variance

At the last counsel meeting I was given limited authority to issue Site Plan approvals that do not need Zoning Variances.

We our posting plans on our website, and can receive comments from the public by email, or on my phone. We should explain this in a letter from myself posted on the City Webpage

My proposal is to send Site Plans which our otherwise consistent with Zoning Code to Board Members electronically, together with public comments, process their comments and then make determinations on issuance of Site Plan approval with Conditions.

Our team of Wanda, Scott and myself should be able to do this with Board Members who use email, one does not at this point. Delivering Plans is less optimal/

4. Approvals requiring Zoning Variances

Because the Zoning Process is created by State Legislation, we cannot issue Zoning Variances without ZBA approval.

Because there is emergency legislation we can suspend public hearing if we broadcast or publish minutes, but we need to then adjourn matter to receive public comments after any presentation. The neighbors have a property interest in what goes on adjacent, or nearby properties, and we must provide them due process to protect their property interests.

We need to get plans to ZBA members in advance of meeting, and to post same online.

We need more tools to produce transcripts on line, and we will need to probably keep myself, Scott and a Board member at ZBA meetings, and let some Board members appear remotely. Remote appearances will require a speaker phone at the table that can handle a conference call; a video conference would be preferred.

Presenters may need to be present.

We can exclude public from the room, but we need to give the interested Public an opportunity to review plans, and presentations, and then respond before a vote on a variance.

5. Overseeing Redevelopment efforts internally, and in conjunction with other Governmental Agencies.

I can continue to do this.

6. Works on Procuring and Implementing Grants, and procuring consultants and vendors re same.

This does take interdepartmental coordination between my office, City Clerk, Law, Public Works and Comptroller. We will have to address and work together remotely.