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Item # 23-0603

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To: Planning Department <planning@edcgov.us>

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March 21, 2023

Dear Planning Commission:

Thank you very much for requesting potential workshop topics from the public. As someone who has had several permits with the Planning and Building Services department as well as DOT in the past few years, I have had first-hand experience and frustration with the process on every single permit application I have submitted. Below are five projects for which I have applied for permits in the past 1.5 years:

- A simple remodel of our house (no change in footprint) – permit processing took 4+ months.
- Encroachment permit for our driveway – information on the permit form and the website about how to submit a permit either didn't exist or was contradictory, Help Line staff was not helpful either, it took me several emails and phone calls before I could ascertain how to submit the permit application correctly.
- Commercial sign permit – took 6 months and dozens of person hours on my end to get the permit. DOT and Planning gave conflicting information within their own departments and I even received conflicting information from the same staff person during two different conversations.
- Building permit for commercial buildings – still in process. Planning took four months to respond to building permit application, **after** we had already received two responses from Building. Process for getting department sign-off (fire, water, RCD, etc.) is extremely confusing and unclear. Some department phone numbers listed on E-Trakit are out of service. Requested help from the Ombudsman and her response was to send me the link to E-Trakit.
- CUP process – I won't go into the details in this letter, but suffice to say it has been extremely difficult, expensive, time-consuming, and frustrating.

Based on my own experience, below are some workshop topics I would suggest for the Planning Commission to consider. The first one I would start with, though, is a general workshop on issues the public has had with permitting. You could host an open forum for the public to come forward with issues and challenges they have encountered, and use that to inform and/or shape future workshops. Here are some other suggestions:

CUP Process

- When is a CUP required and is there any discretion in this?
- What is the process? Where does staff have discretion in the process to move it forward easier and quicker?
- What are ways the CUP process could be simplified and sped up?
- When is a revision to a CUP application required by statute, and when can it be discretionary for staff to approve minor changes without going to the full Planning Commission? What is the staff process for making this determination?

Potential changes to planning and building code to make building process less expensive and support environmental sustainability.

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- Allowing compost toilets/gray water systems/alternatives to traditional septic systems – what code changes would need to be made to allow alternative waste systems?
- Alternative building materials – What materials are allowed in California but not allowed in EDC? Could we change this?
- Tiny homes – what changes would need to be made to allow and encourage them?
- Trailers – could/should we allow people to sleep in trailers on their own property?

Permitting process

- Planning and building department metrics – what are they?
- What should be added to the metrics to improve monitoring of how well the process works for permit applicants?
- What is the accountability to meet or improve metrics?
- How should the permitting process be changed to speed up processing times? To improve customer service? To make it easier and more transparent for applicants to navigate the process?
- Is there a mechanism for garnering feedback from permit applicants, both former and current, to improve the permitting process? If so, is this feedback used to make improvements?
- Is there a mechanism for garnering suggestions from customer-facing staff to improve the process? If so, is this feedback used to make improvements?

Ombudsman process

- What is the role of the ombudsman?
- Is it working as intended? Why or why not?

E-Trakit

- How does e-trakit support applicants in the permitting process?
- What can e-trakit measure? Are we measuring as much as we can?
- How are e-trakit measurements used to support improvements in processing times and customer service.
- How is information in e-trakit kept up to date?

DOT/Planning/Building/other departments

- How does a permit applicant know which departments need to sign off on their project? At what point in the process do they know it? Is there a deadline for each department to weigh in?
- What is the process for getting each department to sign off on a permit? Who does this, the applicant or county staff? Is the current process working?
- Where are there bottlenecks between departments? Do we measure this? How can bottlenecks be improved?

Thank you, again, for providing this forum. I really appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Tamara Johnston
Resident and Business Owner in Kelsey, El Dorado County