

# **Meeting Notes**

## **Land Use Information Accessibility Advisory Group**

**6 September 2006**

**Chairman Walter Alcorn welcomed the members and brought the Advisory Group meeting to order.**

**Meeting schedule for the Advisory Group:**

**Next meeting:**

- **October 11<sup>th</sup> Room 9&10 of the Government Center**

**Future Meetings:**

- **November 8<sup>th</sup>**

**All meetings will now start at 7:15.**

**The first Demo was given by Greg Scott. He reviewed the new building permits and land use and development pages. These pages were previously titled land development and zoning respectively. The new pages were launched two weeks ago. One issue is that an automatic re-direct needs to be created online for people that bookmarked the old pages so that they can easily get to the new pages. The re-direct will be in place tomorrow, Thursday the 7<sup>th</sup> of September. Also a link to LDSNet search by address will be added to the pages. There has not been any feedback on the web pages as of yet.**

**After the walkthrough there were some questions from the committee:**

**Q: Why can we not see building permits past one month?**

**Q: Can it be possible to search the report by address, street name, magisterial district and Permit Type?**

**Q: Can a permit search show complaints reported for locations and/or show the contractor listed on the permit application when that information is included on the permit?**

**Q: Can zoning complains be posted on the internet for the public as opposed to on the intranet, for county officials only?**

**Q: Possibility of notifying electronically members of the public requesting such notifications about nearby (e.g. ¼ mile radius) site plan/subdivision plans submitted for approval.**

**Staff will research the questions and get back to the group. For Complaints, staff talked about the two complaint modules that are in production in FIDO (one for the Health Department and one for the Department of Planning and Zoning), but indicated that the County has not decided whether it wants to post complaints online. Work is also in progress for DPWES to implement a FIDO complaint module.**

**The second demo – Plan Search By address was given by Jeanne Wright. This functionality is part of the LDSNet pages and can be reached through the “e-Services” option or the “Land Use and Development” options on the County Web Site home page. Search by address gives you access to both zoning application or subdivision and site plans within ¼ mile radius from the address that you choose for the search.**

**In addition, the committee recommended that building permits for the address used for the search be displayed as well. The committee further recommended that any zoning applications, subdivision site plans or building permits directly associated with the address used for the search be given specific notation on the “Summary of Land Use” page. The committee recommended that land use lifecycle statuses be displayed as well for the information displayed (e.g., that subdivision plans associated with a previous rezoning approval be identified). They recommended a glossary of terms describing the statuses and steps in the process.**

**There was a discussion of more flexible custom searching for users that can be book marked. Depending on the technology employed to save searches, there could be issues with this as it might require a cookie being placed on a users’ computer, which is against County policy.**

**Any further comments about the new functionality can be sent to the LDS administrator. There is an option on the LDSNet main screen. The next functionality to be released will be LDSNet search by magisterial district and that will be available the second week of October.**

**Linda Boaz did a demo of the bond information available in LDSNet. There were questions from the committee about how it could be made easier for users to find key information such as “base number” and “project number”. This information can be found and Linda showed where it is located. You can find the information using the PAWS custom search feature and utilizing any information that you know about the plan. A suggestion to make custom search easier to find and more intuitive for a user to use was made.**

**A question was asked as to whether a query can be constructed to select all bonds information collectively instead of going by each bond type. Linda showed how bond information can be cross referenced with proffers and to look for pro-rata shares. Linda also noted that this is the first attempt to make this information available electronically and that staff is open to suggestions on how to organize and present this information.**

**Several committee members commended County staff for the improvements demonstrated at the meeting, noting that these improvements were very helpful in making important land use information more accessible to the public.**

***Discussion of Committee report:***

**Walter led this discussion and stated the group needed to create a vision for making land use information more available in the short and long term (5-10 years).**

**Walter's comments: from a broad perspective of public requirement of land use information, some points to consider:**

- 1. Provide information from a process perspective.**
- 2. Look at information from geographic perspective.**
- 3. Look at information from user type - a citizen/neighbor versus an applicant or professional.**
- 4. Issue of scale – information accessed by site (e.g., a rezoning case) or on a community basis.**
- 5. Time - showing current and historic cases.**

**Other ideas from the committee:**

**Proposed Public Facilities Manual changes, ordinance amendments and resulting verbatim information from the planning commissioners need to be available to the public as early as possible.**

**Make sure countywide proposals and policies, as well as neighborhood information and plans for the future are available online and easy to access. These are two different focuses with two different audiences.**

**There was further discussion on focusing data access methods on the types of users: individual users, planners, attorneys, developers, County staff and elected officials. Perhaps this can be divided into basic users and detailed users with functionality that makes sense for either type of user.**

**Glossary of terms for land use should be included online for the basic user.**

**A new page should be added for basic users “So you have a land use question”, which would give basic information that people should know and help direct different types of users to appropriate pages. This is similar to the “So you think that you have a zoning complaint” page.**

**Additional aggregate functions needed - e.g. in Mount Vernon % of RZ’s approved for R1 to R30.**

**Walter discussed possible recommendations from the group as guiding principles such as:**

- **Provide information at the earliest opportunity**
- **Create multiple ways to find information**
- **Make all public information easy to find**
- **Make data display consistent**
- **Make searches across projects available**

- **Make sure that the system and any changes made are open and scalable so future needs can be addressed**

**Walter would like to bring a straw man to the next meeting and focus the meeting on starting to form the committee's recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. Walter asked if County staff would be required for future meeting and the group indicated that having County staff available for questions was helpful.**

**Dave stated that because the next meeting was going to focus on recommendations, he would recommend to DPZ and to DPWES that the appropriate operational staff from both agencies attend the next meeting to answer policy questions.**

**Advisory Group Members in Attendance:**

**Walter Alcorn - Chairman**

**Judith Anderson – League of Women Voters**

**Allison Anderson - EQAC**

**David Kochendarfer – Sully District**

**Linus Upson – Providence District**

**David Dale – Mount Vernon District (Sheldon Hoenig also attended for Mount Vernon)**

**James Katcham – Federation of Citizens Associations**

**Not Present**

**Anne Kanter – ITPAC**

**Not Nominated**

**Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce Member**