



**ISLAMORADA, VILLAGE OF ISLANDS  
VILLAGE COUNCIL WORKSHOP**

**Founders Park Community Center  
87000 Overseas Hwy  
Islamorada, FL 33036  
January 11, 2013  
10:00 AM**

**I. CALL TO ORDER\ROLL CALL**

Mayor Ken Philipson called the meeting to order at 10:22 AM. The following Council members were present on roll call: Mayor Ken Philipson, Vice Mayor Ted Blackburn, Councilman Mike Forster, Councilwoman Deb Gillis, and Councilman Dave Purdo. Also in attendance were Village Manager Ed Koconis, Village Clerk Ariana Lawson, Village Attorneys Nina Boniske and James White, and all other appropriate personnel.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Philipson invited Robert Silk to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. PRESENTATIONS**

**A. Overview of Respective Planning and Building Departments' Current Permitting Processes and Planned Enhancements**

Village Manager Ed Koconis welcomed all those in attendance and introduced the need for the workshop. Mr. Koconis identified staff interpretation of regulations as a major issue for discussion. Mr. Koconis reminded Council and the audience that the Village is still relatively young and that most of its ordinances were drafted shortly after incorporation on December 31, 1997. He also noted that as a Florida Area of Critical State Concern, some of the Village's regulations are mandated by the State for environmental protection, and as such are much stricter than in other communities. Mr. Koconis discussed ongoing efforts by the Building and Planning Departments to improve operational efficiency including the recent addition of a second Permit Clerk to assist at the front desk, the initiation of records scanning for eventual online document access, and Village-wide "culture of service" training. Mr. Koconis also discussed proposed operational changes included removal of the commercial BPAS allocation system; amendments to US 1 concurrency, TDRs, and parking regulations; reduction in circumstances requiring conditional use permits; and remodeling of the permit intake area to allow for immediate consultation with contractors/homeowners.

Mayor Philipson stated that he would like to be provided an overview of what the Building and Planning Departments do and how the two departments interact. Mr. Koconis explained to Council the current permit application intake, routing, payment and review process. Mayor Philipson inquired how an applicant knows what to include in a permit application. Mr. Koconis stated that the Permit Clerk reviews applications at intake and advises the applicant within a day or so whether they are missing any particular

items. For larger projects, staff recommends pre-application conferences to explain the required elements for permit applications.

Councilman Purdo compared the Village's Planning Department staffing levels with those of the City of Marathon and City of Key West. Mr. Koconis advised Council that the Village's Planning Department handles stormwater planning, whereas Marathon's Public Works Department handles stormwater planning for the City of Marathon.

Council inquired how staff determines which items are reviewed by the Planning Department and which are reviewed by the Building Department. Mr. Koconis stated that, in general, structural items are reviewed by the Building Department and non-structural items are reviewed by Planning. He specified that the Building Department ensures compliance with Florida Building Code including plumbing, electrical, and mechanical issues; whereas the Planning Department reviews other items such as parking, stormwater, landscaping, and traffic engineering issues.

Council inquired what the normal timeframe is for review of a permit application. Mr. Koconis stated that review times vary, but that staff is considering establishing set review periods for different types of permit applications. Mayor Philipson inquired why individual Planners are unable to see an application through from start to finish. Mr. Koconis explained that permits often require review by more than one staff member who possess different skill sets. He stated that with regard to time, the more pressing concern is the delay of permit applications during busy periods.

Councilman Forster opined that now is the appropriate time to separate the Village Manager and Director of Building and Planning Services positions again. Councilman Purdo concurred. Vice Mayor Blackburn commented that each of the previous Village Managers brought expertise from their own backgrounds to the office of the Village Manager, as does Mr. Koconis.

Councilman Forster stated that he has received letters from local contractors who are unhappy with the Building and Planning Departments, but are hesitant to comment for fear of retribution. He read aloud a letter from former Village Planning Department staff member Brian Sheehan offering to host Village staff for information exchange with Lake County. Councilman Forster recounted personal experiences dealing with the Planning Department while not on Council.

Vice Mayor Blackburn stressed the value and importance of Building and Planning Departments in protecting local governments, and noted the symbiotic relationship between local government and local business. He expressed the desire to see the Planning Department benefit from helpful feedback to increase operational efficiency.

Councilman Forster stated that he would not like to see the Village be undesignated as an Area of Critical State Concern, and clarified that that was not his goal.

Councilwoman Gillis expressed the desire to hear from as many constituents as possible, without fear of retribution. She agreed that the Village Manager/Director of Planning and Building Services' workload may need to be evaluated.

Mayor Philipson noted that his primary hope for this workshop was to gain more of an understanding of the differences between the job duties of the Planning versus Building Departments, and that the next workshop would be geared more toward input from the public.

#### **IV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mayor Philipson called for public comment. Roger Young, 232 Tide Ave, stated that Village Manager Ed Koconis' summary of the Building and Planning Department's goals for better operational efficiency was

fairly comprehensive. Mr. Young remarked that his main concern with the Planning Department is the inconsistency he has experienced in regulatory interpretation by staff. He suggested that increased advertisement of the next public workshop may increase attendance.

## V. COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Mayor Philipson stated that he still did not have a clear understanding of the differing job duties of the Planning versus Building Departments. He also stated that one of the most frequent complaints he hears about the Planning Department is not knowing what the permitting fees will be until an application is submitted. Village Manager Ed Koconis suggested individuals unsure of permitting fees may contact Chief Building Official Gerry Albertson ahead of time for a calculation. Gerry Albertson provided an explanation of how the current building fees are determined. Mr. Albertson stated that a basic permit fee schedule is available on the Village's website and at the kiosk in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor lobby, Administration and Public Safety Headquarters, 86800 Overseas Highway, Islamorada, FL 33036. Mayor Philipson inquired of Mr. Albertson whether the anticipated CityView upgrade would benefit the Building Department operations. Mr. Albertson replied that it would enable online permit application processing and that the installation of laptops inside inspectors' vehicles would allow for instant uploading of inspection information in the field. Based on last year's total permits received count of 1,113, Mr. Albertson estimated that the Village receives approximately 21 applications per week.

Dave Boerner, Islamorada, commented that the Building Department is responsible for public safety as mandated by the State, and that regulatory interpretation requires knowledge, expertise and experience. He stated that the Planning Department is concerned with ensuring community fit, and that issues with the Planning Department are more procedural in nature. Mr. Boerner suggested that electronic permit applications submitted online could be reviewed concurrently by different staff members reviewing different components independently.

Robert Silk, Islamorada/Key Largo Free Press, requested clarification of commercial allocations by the State. Ed Koconis explained that since 1996 the State has given out a limited number of allocations and that the Village is now proposing to exempt commercial square footage from going through BPAS.

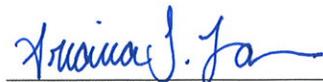
LPA Member Cheryl Culberson requested Ed Koconis attend Monday, February 11, 2013 LPA Meeting.

David deHaas, Consultant, indicated to Council that the time-consuming part of the process is the planning permit application review, as opposed to the building permit applications. He suggested implementing hard review deadlines and automatically scheduled hearings, with applicants in attendance at initial DRC meetings.

Council requested staff schedule a Village Council Joint Workshop with the Local Planning Agency (LPA) on February 11, 2013, immediately following the conclusion of the 5:30 p.m. LPA Meeting.

## VI. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Purdo and seconded by Councilwoman Gillis. The meeting adjourned at 11:51 AM.



Ariana S. Lawson  
Village Clerk

Approved by the Village Council this 28<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2013.