

Town of Windham

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MEMORANDUM

To: Tony Plante
From: Heather McNally
Date: 5/9/2014
Re: Permit Fee Schedule Proposal

Due to the recent Council changes I am including the language I previously drafted with my initial permit fee increase proposal, with additional changes throughout.

For the past several months I have been preparing information pertaining to the increase of permit fees. As you are aware, one of the tasks requested of me upon my employment was to assess the current fee schedule and make recommendations for possible increases. This has been a large project as there are many things to consider:

1. The time it takes to review an application for completeness.
2. The amount of time it takes to review an application once it has been deemed complete.
3. The number of inspections required for the particular project. This varies depending on the complexity of the project as well as the possible need for a re-inspection.
4. Most applications also involve meetings with the applicant to discuss the project and present them with a permitting packet that fits their project needs.
5. Many times an applicant will request a meeting time that will allow a preliminary review of their submittal packet to determine if it is complete.
6. On occasion a site visit is necessary or requested prior to permitting,
7. Some contractors prefer a pre-final inspection so there aren't any surprises at the Occupancy inspection. Typically this occurs when there is a looming sale of the property.

The Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code has put added workload on the department with the amount of inspections that are now required. The MUBEC is comprised of the IBC2009, IRC2009, IECC2009, and IEBC2009 with references to the NFPA 2009, ASTM Standards, commercial and residential mechanical and ventilation standards, Radon installation standards and numerous other standards and codes that are referenced within each code. These codes and standards have their own inspection requirements. Besides MUBEC we also perform inspections required by the Uniform Plumbing Code 2009 and NEC 2011, which are both State wide codes adopted by the legislature.

A big change that I would like to propose would be the deferment of all commercial electrical installations be referred to the State of Maine for both permitting and inspection purposes. The primary reason for this request is the complexity of commercial installations. I feel it would better serve the community as well as moderately lessen the workload of our department. Commercial electrical permits account for only .03% (\$1050.00) of the permits that have been issued for the current calendar year. (.02% or \$750.00 for the 2012 calendar year)

When putting together my proposal for fee increases I tried to be fair as well as competitive with other towns of similar size. However I did note that several of the communities I reached out to were also in the process of reviewing their fee schedules for similar reasons that they hadn't been updated in quite some time and were not in line with the amount of workload that MUBEC has created. Please know that the workload is not a negative, but in fact a positive as it keeps us more involved in the construction of new buildings and ensures safe structures for the members of our community.

A frequent request when going through this process is to be similar to surrounding towns. While that sounds like a reasonable request, there are flaws in that method. Number one being what I stated earlier, but also our needs and resources are likely different from nearby towns. When a commercial business is "shopping" for a location, permitting fees play a very small part in their final decision. They are primarily looking at the available land, infrastructure, the workforce, property taxes, tax incentives, etc.

Again, I tried to be fair when addressing the fee schedule. Some communities base their fee schedules on the value of the project, and other on square footage. I feel that a schedule based on square footage is the way to go. Historically people play games with the value to try to keep the permit fee down, but square footage is a solid, tangible number that you can't "monkey" with. Also, the codes work associated with a permit isn't necessarily proportionate to the value of the project, but is usually well related to the size of the building. The plan review and inspection work for a house with granite counters and expensive fixtures isn't any more that the same house with basic building materials. Why should the permit cost more?

Therefore with this in mind I have put together a fee schedule that I feel works for everyone involved in the permitting and inspection process. I have also made significant changes to the first draft of my proposal at the council direction. I feel that the changes I have made reflect their wishes as well as address the need for the increase in fees. The proposed increases would account for an approximate total increase of \$195.00 for a new 1500 sq. ft. single family home permit. (\$150.00 for building construction and \$45.00 for electrical)