

To: Planning and Economic Development Committee

From: Robert Griffin, Director of Building Safety

Date: 24 July 2012

Subject: BTIP – Permitting Software, Accela Automation

The City of Asheville development service function incorporates staff from Building Safety, Fire, Planning, Public Works Engineering, Transportation, and Water Resources. A project may involve one or all of these departments based upon the complexity, location, size, and a variety of other factors. As a one-stop-shop, the development process is considered an “Asheville” process and not permitted per function area, i.e. building code, fire code, planning, etc. The project will support our staff in the delivery of services and activities, take advantage of best practices, and significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of customer service and business processes in the Development Service Center. This memorandum will provide an update on the implementation of the Accela Permitting Software for development services.

Accela’s bid included utilizing TruePoint Solutions, Inc. for the implementation of the software. Beginning on November 7, 2011 and continuing through December TruePoint and City staff:

- Conducted two kick-off meetings with all staff involved with the development process;
- Documented current business practices;
- Determined criteria that is not available in current system that would enhance reporting, customer interaction, communication, and improve workflow to be incorporated into Accela Automation for Asheville;
- Determined the best approach to using Accela Automation;
- Installed the Accela Automation product on the City’s system;
- Reviewed and implemented best practices from other jurisdictions with a similar process to Asheville’s and incorporated these into the workflow design.

The period of January through July has involved nearly all development staff and multi-visits by TruePoint staff to Asheville.

- When TruePoint staff was not on location weekly video conferences were conducted with City staff;
- City staff and TruePoint worked on Accela Automation configuration (on-going as of today). This provides the rules for automation allowing the system to remove workflow currently requiring staff intervention and become automated with criteria set for each type of permit activity;
- Installed Accela GIS interface and tested with City of Asheville data as the base;

- We are beginning the testing process for workflow and business rules.
- We have configured all of the 85+/- records and their associated workflow processes, application specific information, fees, and inspections. The fees have been updated to the 2012 schedules.

As of this month, we are still working through the configuration and are modifying the workflow and system rules. We anticipate this will continue through most of month and to a lesser degree on a continuous time line. Three employees are attending a 5-day training seminar at the Accela Conference in August.

August through September the following are scheduled:

- Report development;
- Legacy data conversion;
- Interface development;
- Citizen access setup;
- Mobile office setup;
- System user acceptance testing.

The month of November is reserved for core team, administration, and end-user training. We currently have a “go live” date of Monday, December 10, 2012.

A small sample for what Accela Automation will provide is:

- Proactive alerts and bulletins for dissemination of critical information throughout the staff;
- Track processes throughout the life cycle;
- Event manager scripting for automatic pre-authored emails or calling external systems for customer notifications;
- Summarized charts and graphs for quick review of actionable data;
- Access to metrics for management of resources, project investigations, plan schedules, and detailed statistics;
- Mobile office will allow inspectors access to plans, word documents, contractor information, etc. This feature works on tablets and other smart devices and may eliminate the need for individual lap-top computers improving customer communication, faster inspection result documentation, and computer cost;
- Faster, easier, more detailed, and customer enhanced service for “on-line” acceptance of plans, inspection requests, application submittals, and application process review;
- The system allows us to set conditions or requirements of the permit which will give warnings throughout the process, the format enhances communication between all parties involved;
- We will be able to track continuing education offerings and collected fees;
- We will be able to track time spent on un-permitted work and deter answer shopping by logging our pre-app comments into a central file.