

# **REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

## **HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**MEETING DATE:**      **January 19, 2005**

**SUBJECT:**              **Enforcement Division Proposal**

**ATTACHMENTS:**      **Yes**

### **SUMMARY OF REQUEST:**

**At the Board of Commissioners meeting of December 15, 2004, the Board requested that the County Manager revisit the idea of an enforcement division. (This idea was originally presented as a goal within the County Manager's recommended budget a few years ago.)**

**Attached is an updated proposal to establish a Central Enforcement & Permitting Department. The plan sets forth an improved effort to enhance enforcement efforts and to coordinate our permitting processes.**

**Henderson County**

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**Proposal to  
Establish a Central Enforcement & Permitting Department**



**Presented By:  
David E. Nicholson, County Manager**

**Presented:  
January 19, 2005**

## Why Re-organize our Enforcement and Permitting Services into a single Department?

A popular organizational development theory states that organizations vacillate between a centralization philosophy and a decentralization philosophy due to changing operations and workload demands. The centralization philosophy holds that operational procedures should be centralized in order to increase the responsibility for decisions, actions and record-keeping. The result, it is hoped, will be quick reactions and speedy solutions to issues similar to those we face everyday in County Government. This re-organization also provides for departments operating under a single overarching goals and objectives for the organization, as opposed to their own procedures and policies.

Because the County's enforcement and permitting operations are so closely inter-related and departmental staff coordination is the key, it is more efficient to consolidate enforcement and permitting functions under one department. Those who conduct inspections are oftentimes permit writers, technical experts, and enforcement officers. The actual inspections function is only one aspect of their overall job responsibilities and is directly impacted by the permitting function.

Under the existing organizational structure, five business units (Inspections, Zoning, Property Addressing, Environmental Health, and Solid Waste Enforcement) are involved in the enforcement of County and/or State ordinances and laws, and four (with the exception of Solid Waste) are involved in the permitting process. The County proposes to re-engineer its processes for issuing property addresses, building inspections, environmental health, and zoning permits to provide for a centralized electronic process, as well as the combination of four of these functions which are under the control of the County Manager into one department, thus building on the concept commonly referred to as "one-stop shop." This re-engineering would bring Zoning, Inspections, Property Addressing, and Solid Waste Enforcement under a single department called *Central Enforcement & Permitting Services*. This change is expected to effectively manage the County's permitting and enforcement processes while providing a more efficient process for the County's citizens. While co-location is an important aspect of how this process will work, with today's environment we can also serve the community through the use of technology enhancements. The most significant features of the re-engineered enforcement and permitting process vision include the provision of effective administration of the assigned ordinances and efficient and a consistent and higher level of enforcement for ordinances and regulations.

## Central Enforcement & Permitting Departmental Overview

The Central Enforcement & Permitting Department will be charged with the consolidation of resources to allow a coordinated effort for a more effective code enforcement and permitting function. The department will serve as the location for obtaining permits for construction of residential and commercial units and will provide efficient and consistent enforcement of County ordinances and State building codes.

## Departmental Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Central Enforcement & Permitting Services Department to serve the citizens of Henderson County by *protecting life and property*<sup>1</sup> by insuring that the laws of the State of North Carolina and that of Henderson County are enforced in safe and sound methods, thus promoting orderly growth and protecting the environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Reference the Board of Commissioners Mission Statement, adopted December 17, 2003.

## Departmental Functions

The Department will enforce the County's ordinances and the State of North Carolina's approved Building Code. The Department will issue permits and eventually provide plan review. The Department will achieve its objectives through a fair, but strong enforcement program, and permitting processes for local ordinances and the North Carolina State Building Code.

### **Solid Waste Ordinance Enforcement Division**

- Administer, interpret, and enforce the provisions of the *Henderson County Solid Waste Ordinance pursuant to Chapter 165 of the Henderson County Code*.

### **Property Addressing Division**

- Administer, interpret, and enforce the provisions of the *Henderson County Property Addressing Ordinance pursuant to Chapter 142 of the Henderson County Code*.

### **Zoning Ordinance Administration & Enforcement Division**

- Administer, interpret, and enforce the provisions of the *Zoning Ordinance of Henderson County pursuant to Chapter 200 of the Henderson County Code and the North Carolina General Statutes, particularly Chapter 153A*.

### **Inspections / Building Code Enforcement Division**

- Provide a uniform enforcement of the *North Carolina State Building Code* in order to insure the safety of the County's citizens.

## Departmental Goals

- To educate the public and staff on ordinance and permitting provisions, thus increasing efficiency for those utilizing the services.
- To reduce the amount of paperwork involved in obtaining permits, thus increasing efficiency for staff and for the public.
- To consolidate resources (equipment, as well as staffing), which provides for efficiencies in operations.
- To increase communication between business units, thus reducing opportunities for conflict between these units. For example, a customer might request a septic/well permit for a restaurant from Environmental Health, pay the fee and have the required tests done, only to find that the area isn't zoned for restaurants. In addition to the money that has been spent on permits, the customer has lost valuable time developing ideas that can't be implemented and going from department to department. With the re-engineered program, the applicable departments work together, enabling the formation of a "one-stop shop."
- To provide the opportunity for cross training of staff, to make more efficient use of staff. Staff will over time develop expertise in more than one area, allowing for more flexible deployment of permitting and enforcement staff to address changing needs and priorities.
- To provide opportunities for efficiency via technology enhancements.
- To promote standardization via reduction in the number of duplicate procedures.
- To assist with a review of all of the County's land development ordinances.
- To be proactive in proposing responsible changes to the County's ordinances.

## Strategic Planning for the Department

Although the development of specific strategies and action steps will be role of the department head, the following strategy and action plan correspond with the 2005 Strategic Plan Draft and serve as a guideline for the development of department-specific goals and objectives.

**Strategy:** To develop a central permitting and enforcement plan.

**Action Steps:**

1. Develop goals and objectives for Enforcement Department. (Jan 05)
2. Recruit a department head level position to assume leadership of this function. (Feb 05)
3. Develop plan to improve the permitting process to include cross-training of functions. (July 05)
4. Incorporate central permitting and an improved enforcement process into facility transition plans. (Jan 05 - Sept 06)
5. Fully implement centralized permitting and enforcement process. (July 06)

## Organization Structure

The following organizational structure is proposed for the Central Enforcement & Permitting Services Department. All departments/divisions are already included within County government, but are proposed to be reorganized in order to enforce the County's ordinances with increased efficiency.

