

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Steve Higgins, Acting Director of Planning and Development
DATE: August 25, 2020
SUBJECT: Permit Processing Update

In response to Covid-19 closures in March 2020, Planning & Development introduced an online submission and review process that allowed continuity of service to both industry and the general public using a model that accommodated restrictions on personal interaction. We experienced good results to date with this new process and have continued to modify and improve the system as pandemic related circumstances have changed over the last few months.

While overall permit volumes are only marginally higher than 2019, the time frame in which those applications have been received has been compressed and moved later into the summer cycle instead of the typical early winter/late spring cycle. This compression has created a backlog for processing of permit applications. As of end of day, August 20, 2020, applications are approximately 2 weeks behind in processing submissions and payments while review and assessment of proposals are taking between 2-3 weeks to process depending on the complexity of the application. That being said, the average processing time for the summer months for all permit types issued to date is 15 business days while the average for the same time frame last year was 20 business days. It is important to note this average value is based on all permit types and only reflects permits that have been completed. Applications still in the system as part of the current backlog will not be reflected statistically until they have been issued. Therefore, we expect those average processing time stats to increase as we clear the current backlog.

For Planning & Development to push through the permits currently in the system waiting to be processed and not continue to build on the existing backlog, there are some key areas you can assist with:

- Applications should be made as a complete set (online form and emailed docs on same day) following the email protocol outlined on Halifax.ca.
- Revisions should not be submitted until a permit application number has been assigned.
- Inquiries should be kept to a minimum. Responding to inquiries on permit status significantly reduces the time staff members apply to processing and reviewing applications – accordingly, staff will not be responding to any inquiries on permit status unless the completed application has been in the system for more than 15 business days.
- If an incomplete application has been submitted; documents or additional information have not been submitted, the application cannot be processed. Applicants should follow the guidelines on Halifax.ca which outline how to send P&D documents.

We have assigned additional resources to assist with clearing the backlog and have made further adjustment to the file handing system. As a result, we anticipate that by mid-September we will be in an improved situation.

We appreciate your assistance and patience as we work through this situation. Please feel free to contact me at your convenience if you have any additional questions.

Planning & Development