



Memo

To: Tom Brymer, City Manager
From: Joey Dunn, Director of Planning & Development Services
Date: May 25, 2005
Re: Response to Zucker Systems Organizational Review

The Planning & Development Services Department recently received an organizational review from Paul Zucker, well-known author and planning management consultant from San Diego, CA. Mr. Zucker visited College Station on December 13-15, 2004 to conduct a series of customer focus groups, and lead a half-day staff training session on customer service. Mr. Zucker met with staff members from a number of City departments, as well as members of the Planning & Zoning Commission, City Council, the Blue Ribbon Development Review Committee, and key stakeholders from the development community.

The follow-up Report outlines thirty-six (36) specific recommendations for improvements that Mr. Zucker contends would enhance the Department and the overall development process for the City of College Station. The Executive Summary (pages 3-6 of the Report) outlines five key issue areas, including consistency and decision making, relations with the customer, the development process, Department staff, and prior studies. This memo is intended to address these key issues, and to provide an overview of how each specific recommendation is being implemented by the Department.

Immediately following Mr. Zucker's visit in December, I prepared the following four-point Focus for the Department of Planning & Development Services:

1. **Communication** – Improvements for better internal as well as external communications.
2. **Customer Service** – Changes centered on the needs of our customers, such as physical office changes, meeting spaces, and customer resources.
3. **Process** – Revised cycle times, based on level of reviews, and providing quality initial reviews.
4. **Training** – Scheduling weekly internal training sessions with staff, and utilizing resources for external training.

This four-point approach was unveiled at our first quarterly Department Forum held on January 21, 2005, and has since been reinforced and presented to numerous groups, both internal and external to the organization. Similar information was presented to City Council at their workshop meeting on February 10, 2005. I believe it provides important emphasis in most, if not all, issues identified in the Zucker Report, as well as previous reports, including the Blue Ribbon Committee, the Continuous Improvement Team, and the "We" Team.

Presented on pages 11-35 of the Zucker Report, thirty-six recommendations are based around organizational, process, and policy oriented issues. Each issue and recommendation is listed below, with current implementation status (*in italics*).

III. Organizational Issues

A. Building Division (page 11):

Recommendation #1: **The Building Division should continue to work to have all staff certified.** *The Building Division continues to budget travel/training funds each year for adequate certification training and testing for each of the building inspectors and plans examiners. Job knowledge, including certifications, is also an important component of each employee's performance evaluation.*

Recommendation #2: **The Building Division should decide if at some point in time a structural engineer should be added to the staff.** *Staff will continue to monitor the issue raised by this recommendation and re-evaluate the need for the addition of a structural engineer on staff. The recently-adopted 2003 International Building Code (IBC) currently requires special inspections to be performed by a third party inspector on many building components such as structural steel connections and concrete construction. The City has also amended the 2003 IBC to require that a design professional prepare plans for buildings and structures 5,000 square feet or more in area and for all buildings and structures containing educational, assembly, or institutional uses. Requiring the involvement of third party inspectors and design professionals in these instances helps assure that building designs are structurally sound.*

B. Change (page 11): *No specific recommendation was included in this section; however it was stated that it takes time for staff to embrace and introduce change into the organization, as long as they feel they are in a safe and supportive environment. Over the past several months since Zucker's visit, it has been my observation that the staff are more openly embracing the recent department changes, and are more actively involved with other departments in this effort.*

C. City Attorney's Office (page 12):

Recommendation #3:

- **The City Attorney and Development Services should agree on items that need legal review.**
- **The City Attorney and Development Services should develop an agreement on procedures and particularly reasonable timelines for legal reviews. Legal reviews, whenever possible, should take place in the early phases of a process, not the later phases.**

Communication now occurs on a daily basis among staff from the City Attorney's Office and P&DS, particularly in areas of ordinance review and implementation. The City Attorney and the Director of Planning & Development Services have also discussed what items need legal review, and in particular reasonable timelines for review of development-related cases scheduled for board or commission meetings. Both departments now work closely in the review of staff reports and agendas for the Planning & Zoning Commission. This increased level of communication has been beneficial to both departments, resulting in better prepared staff.

D. Customer Relations (page 12):

Recommendation #4: The Planning and Development Services Department should examine the ideas outlined [below] and develop an expanded customer relations and community outreach program.

- **Holding routine monthly or bi-monthly meetings with the industry.** *Department Forums were held on Jan. 21, 2005 and May 16, 2005. Director's Breakfasts/Luncheons have been held every two weeks with smaller customer groups, beginning in January 2005.*
- **Expanding the newsletter to include more planning information. The November issues didn't contain a single story about long rang planning or policy initiatives.** *While the current newsletter format is being used for our monthly issues, we are currently developing a new magazine-style format for the newsletter. P&DS Staff have met with representatives of the Economic Development Department and the Public Communication Department to put together an initial issue as a pilot project in August 2005.*
- **Conducting a mail survey of customers.** *A mail survey has not yet been conducted. We may use this method for feedback later this year, as we gauge the level of progress we are making with the recommendations in this Report.*
- **Using counter comment cards which solicit customer feedback and suggestions.** *We recently implemented this method.*
- **Creating and using email lists of all builders, developers, architects, planners, community organizations and special interest groups active in the community.** *We are currently building a new e-mail database of customer contacts and updating existing customer information obtained from our permitting software system. We have also obtained e-mail listserve information for the members of BLDF, the BCS Realtors Association, Homebuilders Association, HOA's, and other local organizations.*

E. Engineers (page 13):

Recommendation #5: The current system of having the engineers in Public Works should be continued and reviewed for productivity and coordination issues in 12 months. *The Director of Planning & Development Services and the Senior Assistant City Engineer assigned to development review, collaborate on a daily basis in the review of development proposals. All input for process improvements are discussed among staff, and resolved immediately. The current organizational structure provides a positive, on-site link between the P&DS Department and Public Works Department in the coordination of all engineering-related issues associated with private development and public capital improvement projects. As recommended, the current system will continue to be reviewed and monitored for effectiveness.*

F. Development Coordinator Function (page 13-14):

Recommendation #6: The Director, Development Coordinator and Development Coordinator staff should meet to discuss the issues outlined [below] and develop an action plan to address the issues.

- **Staff in the back often do not want to help customers out at the front counter.** *The perception of staff not wanting to assist customers at the front counter has been alleviated with the implementation of the new Staff-on-Call (SOC) function. Each Planner is responsible for scheduling SOC shifts so that all customers, both walk-ins and those*

calling by phone, are addressed immediately M-F 8-5. This serves as a time management tool for staff to be responsive to customers and while also handling important long-range projects.

- **Some of the staff are demeaning to the Customer Service Reps. and Staff Assistants.** *The issue of treating everyone equally and with respect has been discussed with everyone in the department. All staff members have been encouraged to be cognizant of their words and actions when dealing with one another. Staff is aware of the importance of teamwork and is striving to promote a positive environment for everyone.*
- **Planners pull items out of the files and expect them to be refilled without proper notation of the appropriate file.** *A new file folder system is currently being used which contains a series of dividers and pockets, for better file organization. Staff members have been instructed to make sure that every document in a file has the correct file number or identifier on it, for ease of re-filing.*
- **There was inadequate training on the HTE upgrades.** *The Department is now scheduling several staff members to attend state and national conferences for additional HTE training opportunities. These staff members will be responsible for scheduling training for other departmental staff to share information regarding upgrades and other HTE processes.*
- **Additional training for any new Customer Service Reps. would be useful.** *The Development Coordinator is currently organizing a training manual for the entire Department. As part of this training manual each position will have a designated training schedule that will address this deficiency within the Department.*
- **The Development Coordinator may need to spend additional time on management functions and delegate work in order to do so.** *Since the management function is critical in every cohesive organization, the Development Coordinator has begun delegating various tasks in order to focus more on managing and communicating more effectively with all of the support staff. Regular weekly staff meetings have been scheduled as part of this improvement allowing opportunities for the support staff to voice their opinions and suggest improvements to the development review process. By example, the Development Coordinator has worked to promote a more dedicated and enthusiastic professional support team.*

G. Fees (page 14): *No specific recommendation was included in this section; however, it was noted that our fees are extremely low, compared to other communities throughout the country. Fees collected by the Department currently account for approximately 50 percent of total Department expenses. Appendix F of the adopted FY05 Budget includes the current Council financial policy of moving toward full cost recovery through user-based fees. The current fee structure would need to be revised significantly, in order to achieve the 80-100 percent cost recovery goal. If a fee structure revision is considered in the future, it will be essential to communicate such changes with development customers.*

H. Leadership (page 14):

Recommendation #7: **The Director of Planning and Development Services and the City Manager should review the [below] discussion and develop a plan to address transition issues.**

- **To be successful the Director must build the trust and confidence of his staff. Many of the staff are currently not clear on the direction of the Department. Given the way the resignations were handled, some feel very insecure.** *Although it takes time to build trust and confidence among staff, the Director has kept open lines of communication among the staff, soliciting their input and clarifying Department direction.*

- **To be successful the Director must retain the confidence of the City staff. This can be difficult since some feel that he is being directly told what to do by the City Manager. This issue can be helped if the City Manager can send signals that he wants a strong and professional planning function.** *The City Manager has made concerted efforts to support professional planning functions through his interaction with staff, and the trust level that he has established with the Director. Although it may be the opinion of some that the Director is being closely managed by the City Manager, I can speak truthfully that on a daily basis this is simply not the case. Through his actions, the City Manager has placed his complete confidence in the Director to lead the Department in making positive, desperately needed, change.*
- **Additionally:**
 1. **It appears that some of the directions the City Manager wishes to take have not yet been memorialized either in City Council policy or ordinances. The City Manager should take the initiative in presenting these to the City Council. However, the Director also has the responsibility to interpret the City Managers direction for the staff.** *The City Manager agrees with this recommendation. However, it is not clear which specific area or areas the consultant feels need to be memorialized in Council policy or City ordinance. The City Manager states that he intends to take steps to address this recommendation. First, he will meet with Planning & Development Services staff to hear from them what areas that they feel need to be clarified in writing by Council policy or by City ordinance. Once those are identified, he will have the Director bring those forward to Council and/or the Planning & Zoning Commission. The City Manager will also ask the Council and Planning & Zoning Commission to identify any areas of policy that they feel need to be memorialized in written policy and/or ordinance. In the final analysis, any directions the City Manager wishes to move in should be in concert with the strategic direction of the city set by the City Council.*
 2. **The City Manager's involvement in development projects should take place at the early phases of any project, not the later phases. Staff should periodically visit with the City Manager so they have a clear understanding of his concerns.** *The Monthly Development Briefing meetings have been very helpful in opening lines of communication between the City Manager and staff, specifically regarding upcoming issues in early stages of development projects, or discussions of policies to promote higher quality development.*
 3. **The City Manager should make it clear to staff that he expects them to provide their professional recommendations on all items within the context of City policy direction. When the City Manager makes a recommendation or decision that differs from the staff recommendation, he should clearly note this decision as his own.** *Clear expectations in this area are extremely important and the City Manager agrees with this recommendation. The staff's recommendation is important and ultimately becomes the City Manager's responsibility once presented to the City Council. The City Manager states that he will make sure that the Department staff understands that he expects their professional recommendations to be presented to the Council and/or Planning & Zoning Commission. Additionally, if he differs with their recommendation, it will be noted, and communicated back to the staff through the Department Director. Both the City Manager and Department Director will continue to provide guidance to staff regarding evolving Council policies.*
- **When organizations are in turmoil, they require an increase in communication. This is particularly true in this instance where the new Director is charged with setting a new direction and tone for the Department. However, I was told that the Director is burdened with meetings and is seldom in his office. In order to change the culture of the organization, he must be available to staff. In addition to delegating more meetings, it is essential that a supervisor for the planners be in place as soon as**

possible. The recent hiring of the Assistant Director has allowed the Director to delegate some of his meetings for greater availability. Both the Director and the Assistant Director hold weekly meetings with staff to monitor and communicate openly about Department changes. In addition, the Planning Administrator position will be posted within the next month, which will supervise all planning staff, similar to the proposed organizational structure in Alternative A of the Report (Planning Administrator is reflected as "Planning Manager" in the organizational chart below).

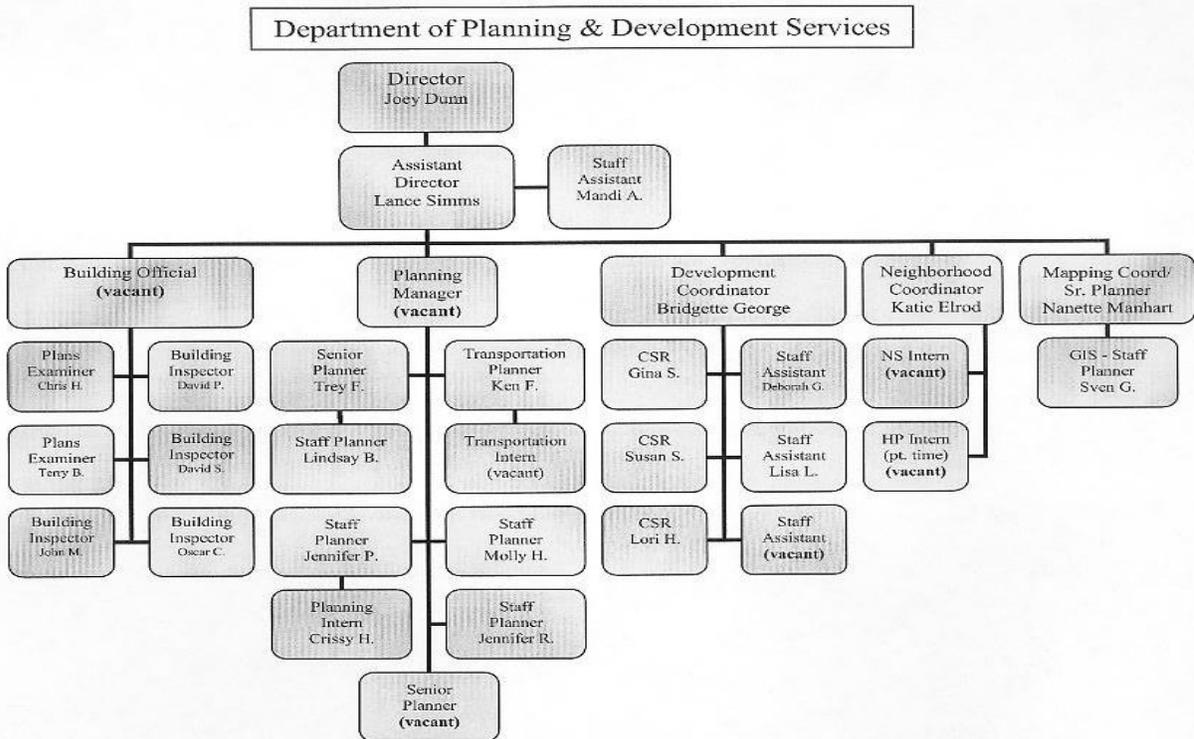
I. Office Space (page 15):

Recommendation #8: The Department should continue to explore changes to the office space to present a more open atmosphere. Phase one of the office reconfiguration was completed by January 2005, which included a new conference room, changes to the front counter area, and the relocation of approximately 12 staff into appropriate workgroup locations. Phase Two is currently underway, which will involve removal of more internal walls, relocation of an engineer's office, and opening up space up front for increased interaction among our customers and Staff Assistants.

Recommendation #9: The topic of professional appearance in the department should be a discussion topic for a future staff meeting or part of a staff retreat. Further discussion has been held among staff meetings regarding professional appearance issues. This will also be discussed during our Department Retreat, scheduled for early Fall 2005.

J. Organization (pages 16-21):

Recommendation #10: The Director of Planning and Development Services should review the organizational alternatives described [in the Report]. The revised organizational chart is reflected below, utilizing a structure similar to what is shown in Alternative A (Figure 3, page 19 of the Report), with an Assistant Director and Planning Administrator position.



K. Other Departments (page 22):

Recommendation #11: The current activities underway aimed at increasing interaction with other departments should be continued. During his visit, Mr. Zucker was able to attend one of the first monthly Development Briefing meetings, which includes a number of staff from departments of P&DS, Legal, Parks, Public Works, Fire, CSU, Economic Development, CM Office, among others. Very healthy interaction has occurred in these meetings, identifying upcoming development issues, and discussing best practice policies.

Recommendation #12: The City Manager should designate a person responsible for coordination of all the City's development related activities. This should likely be the Director of Planning and Community Development. The Director of Planning & Development Services has been designated as the coordinator of all development related activities. It is critical that interdepartmental communication continue, particularly with the departments of Economic Development and Public Works.

L. Planning Commission (pages 22-23):

Recommendation #13: The Department should hold discussions with the Planning Commission in relation to development of a methodical training program. Training is now a major part of the P&Z Commission's Plan of Work for 2005. In January 2005, staff conducted a "Development 101" training session for the P&Z Commission, which provided an overview of all general development processes, including annexations, comprehensive plan updates, rezonings, subdivision plats, site plans, building permits, and certificates of occupancy. Commissioners have also been invited to attend an all-day P&Z training session on June 15, 2005, sponsored by the Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association, and hosted by the BVCOG.

Recommendation #14: The Department should encourage the Planning Commission in their pursuit of a Plan of Work and coordinate this Plan with the City's Strategic Plan. On April 7, 2005 the Planning & Zoning Commission adopted the 2005 P&Z Plan of Work, which also makes specific reference to the City Council's adopted Strategic Plan for 2004-2005. The list of projects in the Plan of Work were discussed among Commissioners, Staff, and the City Council for consistency.

M. Staff Diversity (page 23):

Recommendation #15: Planners should be recruited using a national recruitment. The new Director of Planning and Development Services should complete a review of current staff backgrounds and prepare an approach for diversity. National recruitment methods were used in the search for the Assistant Director, with candidates brought in from Georgia, Kentucky and Texas. National recruitment will also be used in the search for Planning Administrator candidates, and any other future openings for professional planning positions.

N. Staffing Levels (pages 23-24): No specific recommendation was included in this section. It was mentioned that although the focus groups felt that both planning & engineering may be understaffed, Mr. Zucker's opinion was that staffing levels are sufficient, given the workload per staff member. I have also heard similar concerns from customers (during Director's Breakfasts/Luncheons I have conducted since Mr. Zucker's visit) regarding a need for an additional Development Review Engineer position.

O. Technology (page 24):

Recommendation #16: Examine the technology and feasibility of having building inspection results automatically posted on the Internet. HTE software is used to track all aspects of the permitting process. HTE offers additional software that allows contractors to view inspection results and inspection comments online. The software also allows contractors to schedule inspections online. There may be other software packages available that perform similar functions. Staff will examine available software options and check into the feasibility of purchasing the technology needed to address this recommendation.

Recommendation #17: Explore the feasibility of optical scanning of files. The City has implemented a system to convert hard files to electronic files through a scanning process. Planning & Development Services staff have begun the scanning process and some files are now accessible electronically. Staff will continue to scan all building and development files, as well as all plats, until all documents are accessible electronically. This is a lengthy process, due to large development files and plans.

Recommendation #18: Take minutes on a computer during the course of various meetings and purchase equipment as necessary for this function. The Department is purchasing a laptop for the four Staff Assistants to use during their board meetings. The Staff Assistants currently support five boards and spend a great deal of time processing minutes from those public meetings, as well as other departmental meetings. The use of a laptop during these meetings will help reduce the amount of time spent reviewing the recordings and transcribing the minutes.

Recommendation #19: A private consultant should be hired to help staff explore additional features that could be included in the HTE system. Web interface software was recently purchased for the purpose of displaying HTE-based P&Z process information from a website. Additional clean-up of the HTE P&Z Module must be done for this feature to become available for public use. OTIS staff are also assisting P&DS in looking for more user-friendly, web-based permitting software.

P. Work Program (pages 25-26):

Recommendation #20: The Department should develop additional details for the Strategic Plan and discuss with all staff the importance of the Strategic Plan and their role in it. Several portions of the 2004-2005 Strategic Plan have been identified for update, including the need for a unified philosophy on growth and development. The Strategic Plan was discussed during the recent City Council Retreat, which is planned to re-convene in Summer 2005. Once the overall Strategic Plan Update is fleshed out at the Council level, staff will then include labor estimates and target dates for each task.

IV. Process Issues

A. Conditional Use Permits (page 27):

Recommendation #21: The City should consider the desirability of having conditional use permits acted on by the Planning Commission. Council approval of conditional use permits was included as part of the adoption of the original UDO in June 2003. Giving final authority back to the Commission could streamline the process, although now the list of possible conditional uses is very small, compared to what it was. The number of conditional use permits has dropped significantly since the use list was shortened.

B. Consistency and Predictability (pages 27-28):

Recommendation #22: The road standards should be completed at an early date, similar to those undertaken for water and sewer. The street design guidelines, technical

specifications, and standard construction details have been reviewed by a group of local engineers for changes consistent among Bryan, College Station, and Brazos County. The final update will be published in the next couple of months.

Recommendation #23: There should be weekly staff training for planners. This training should methodically review the UDO and also discuss the application of common sense interpretations. A schedule of weekly staff training for the planners has been conducted since last January, with each staff member leading in their particular areas of expertise. The areas of training have included the UDO, Comprehensive Plan, demographics, engineering specifications, subdivision ordinance, and follow-up discussion of concepts several of the staff learned from the Management Academy. The training sessions are conducted for one hour every Wednesday. Interpretation discussions occur during these training sessions, as well as informally among the staff (mostly via email) throughout the week.

Recommendation #24: A new policy manual should be created for Planning and Development Services. The old “zoning policies” manual has been discarded. Staff now maintains a list of policy-related questions and comments that are used for each subsequent update of the UDO.

Recommendation #25: Several private developers and business leaders (banker, lawyers, etc.) working within College Station should be asked to conduct several training sessions for City staff on the economics of development. Charles Thomas, local homebuilder, conducted a training session in February with the building inspectors regarding the economics of home construction. Other developers are being asked to volunteer for other training sessions to be scheduled later this year.

C. Decompress time frame for development review (pages 28-29):

Recommendation #26: Consideration should be given to the following process changes:

- The submittal requirements for each type of application should be reviewed and clarified as necessary. Projects should be screened against the submittal requirements either at time of application or within the same or next day of submittal. The Customer Service Representatives have been trained and instructed to check each application and all submittal requirements at the time of submission to insure that the application is as complete as possible. This initial review covers submittal requirements only; it does not include the actual plan review elements that require the full review time to determine level of completion.
- Projects should be triaged. This means that simple projects can proceed faster than more complex projects. Separate timelines should be established for each type of project. Upon assignment of all development projects each week, staff is responsible for determining which projects are minor and should be reviewed first. These projects proceed faster than the more complex ones and comments are returned as soon as the review is complete, usually within a few days of the submittal deadline. Once reviewed, the more complex projects are also returned to the applicant as soon as possible, usually within the advertised 5-day turnaround time. Currently, all construction plans for infrastructure have a 10-day turnaround time period.
- Consideration should be given to changing the current five day review time for most projects to either 7 or 10 days. The time for subsequent cycles or reviews should be at 5 days or less where feasible. Two changes have been implemented recently involving development review cycle times. First, we have extended the review period for infrastructure construction plans from 5 days to 10 days. Since construction documents require additional time to review, modifying these review times and notifying our customers about the change will mitigate their expectation of receiving them within the previous 5-day goal. Second, we are no

longer issuing “stop reviews” on projects. Staff is now performing as complete of a review as possible before returning comments. One problem staff has identified with performing a complete review on incomplete submittals, is the fact that our customers will most likely receive new comments not previously mentioned, because their re-submittal may include elements that were not included with the original submittal.

- **Should any reviews be desired by the City Attorney, City Manager, or Economic Development Director, such reviews should optimally be included in the first cycle only. The Planning and Community Development Director needs to be sensitive as to when these reviews are necessary.** *The Director attends initial project distribution staff meetings each week to look for new submittals that may need early involvement from other departments, and/or notification to the City Manager, City Attorney, or Economic Development Director.*

D. Guide to Building and Development (pages 29-30):

Recommendation #27: **The Guide to Building and Development should be given a high priority for completion. The items listed [in the Report] should be clarified.** *A draft revision of the Guide has been prepared by staff. The document is currently being reviewed by the Management Team, and is anticipated for public distribution and posting on the Department website by the end of May 2005.*

E. Miscellaneous Issues (page 30):

Recommendation #28: **Planning and Development Services should take the lead in making certain the following issues have been addressed:**

- **Obtain as-built plans within 30 days of issuance of certificate of completion.** *As-built plans of privately-built, public infrastructure are required to be submitted to the City within 30 days of the issuance of a certificate of completion. There is often little incentive for the design engineer to provide such plans, after infrastructure is built. Options are currently being examined as part of the Subdivision Regulations Update to provide such an incentive to get As-builts within this specified timeframe.*

- **Correct “no man’s land” problem between easement and 5’ perimeter of building.** *There has been some debate over what City department is responsible for inspecting Fire sprinkler supply lines within 5-foot perimeters of buildings. The Building Division has traditionally been responsible for areas within 5 feet of buildings, and all private piping up to connections to public water lines. The Public Works Department inspected all public infrastructure, and the Fire Marshal’s Office inspected all sprinkler system piping within the building - fire sprinkler supply lines are typically considered part of the City’s water system (public), up to the backflow prevention device; in most cases the device is located inside of the building.*

The division of department responsibility described above created a situation where the portion of the fire sprinkler supply line within 5 feet of the building was not being inspected at all. Recently, the Public Works Department agreed to begin inspecting the fire sprinkler supply line when the backflow prevention device is located inside of the building, since the water system is considered to be “public”, up to the device. In the rare cases where the device is located outside of the building, all piping on the building side of the device is considered to be private, and part of the fire system. As such, it will be inspected by the Fire Marshal’s Office, along with the fire sprinkler system. This recent clarification of the areas of responsibility should correct the “no man’s land” problem pointed out in the Report.

- **Improve management and oversight of issuance of “slab only” permits.** *The International Building Code provides for “phased approval” of projects – effectively*

allowing the Building Official to issue a permit for foundations or other parts of a building before the plans for the whole building are complete. While the phased approval approach offers certain benefits, care must be taken to assure minimum conditions are met prior to the issuance of "slab only" permits. To that end, Planning & Development Services developed a written policy specifying the conditions allowing the issuance of "slab only" permits. The policy was subsequently communicated to homebuilders via the local Homebuilders Association. More recently, Planning & Development Services worked with personnel from Public Works to further clarify the conditions contained in the "slab only" policy. We believe the written policy and recent policy clarifications provide for the effective management and oversight of "slab only" permits.

F. On-Call Planners (page 30): *The Report supports the Staffer-on-Call concept. We intend to keep this system in place, with only minor changes considered as part of appropriate staffing levels.*

G. Parks (page 31):

Recommendation #29: *Consideration should be given to delegating more decisions on park dedication or fees to staff. It would also be useful to include a Parks Department staff liaison in development review for this purpose. The current draft of the Subdivision Regulations Ordinance includes this recommended staff approval process for smaller subdivisions.*

H. Phone Calls (page 31):

Recommendation #30: *Adopt a policy that all staff involved in the development process return all phone calls the same day received. This policy has been adopted by the Department.*

I. Pre-Application (pages 31-32):

Recommendation #31: *The normal attendees at the pre-application meeting should meet to discuss and agree on improving the process. The ideas listed [below] should be part of that discussion. The Director of Planning and Development Services should lead the discussion.*

- **The filing deadline could be moved to Monday to increase the amount of staff time for review.** *This recommendation was implemented as of March 7, 2005.*
- **One person should clearly be designated as the chairperson of the meeting. Currently this might be the Development Coordinator but eventually might be whoever supervises the planners.** *The Development Coordinator serves as the current chairperson of pre-application conferences (PACs). Other staff have taken on this role at times in her absence; however, this will also be a function of the Planning Administrator position.*
- **A specific planner should be designated the project manager for each application. This planner should assure that all reviewers complete a good review and will also be the assigned planner once the application is received.** *Initial aspects of the "planner as project manager" concept have been put in place. Full implementation of this concept will also be reinforced by the Planning Administrator position.*
- **The notes for the meeting should be completed by the project manager planner rather than the Development Coordinator. These notes should be distributed to all participants and the applicant shortly after the meeting.** *Same comment as above.*

- **The chairperson of the meeting should monitor attendance and discuss problems with department directors.** *Currently being done by Development Coordinator.*
- **All reviews should be as comprehensive and detailed as possible. This will of course depend on the quality of the submission. While some standard responses are useful, such as clarity on the process, all staff should focus on what are often referred to as “killer issues.” These are issues that may not make the project feasible or acceptable.** *We agree fully with the concept of identifying the “killer issues” early on in the process, particularly during PAC meetings. This concept is currently used.*
- **Sometimes at the meeting, I was told that staff have different editions of the UDO. This is a serious issue that should be corrected.** *At the time of Mr. Zucker’s visit, recent amendments of several sections of the UDO had not yet been printed and published, and staff were working from pre-adoption versions (UDO Update in September 2004 and NRA Ordinance in October 2004). This problem has since been rectified with a reprinting of the new UDO versions.*
- **To help with setting policy direction, it would be helpful for the Director of Planning and Development to monitor a number of these meetings.** *The Director now attends a number of PAC meetings to monitor progress, and interact with customers.*

K. Standard Process (page 32):

Recommendation #32: **Provide an opportunity for the developer to meet to review comments or discuss the project.** *There are now several formal ways developers can meet with staff to review comments or discuss their projects. Regular pre-application conferences are offered on Monday afternoons to review development proposals with developers. For customers who cannot meet on Monday afternoons, staff also schedules special meetings at the customers’ convenience to review their proposals and to address any questions they may have regarding the development review process or ordinance requirements. Facilitation meetings have also been developed and are scheduled on a weekly basis to meet with developers, or their designees, to review staff comments on all development submittals. These meetings are optional and are being provided as an opportunity to provide better communication during the development process.*

Recommendation #33: **Re-emphasize to all staff that first round reviews are to be comprehensive and new items are not to be added in subsequent reviews unless the project changes.** *Providing additional review time has reinforced the concept of comprehensive first reviews. Emphasis regarding this concept is on-going, with consideration given to re-submittals or other project changes proposed by applicants.*

K. We Team Report (page 33):

Recommendation #34: **The City Manager should provide a specific action plan and response to all recommendations of the We Team. He may wish to task the new Director of Planning and Development with providing recommendations in this regard.** *The Assistant Director is conducting a follow-up on the recommendations offered in this previous report. The Director will bring a recommendation to the City Manager regarding what needs appropriate follow-up at this point.*

V. Policy Issues

A. Policy Confusion:

Recommendation #35: The Planning and Development Services Department should take the lead in addressing the policy issues outlined [below].

- In many communities, subdivisions must comply with the Comprehensive Plan. It appears that this would require an ordinance amendment in College Station. *Currently underway as part of the Subdivision Ordinance re-write.*
- There appears to be need for clarification in the City's Oversize Participation Policy. *Currently underway as part of the Subdivision Ordinance re-write.*
- All the plans and ordinances do not necessarily reflect the vision of the City Council or City Manager. *A clearly defined identity and mission for the City of College Station is perhaps one of our greatest needs at this point in time, relative to the current rate of growth. The goals and objectives in the Comprehensive Plan are also in need of update, which we propose to do this next year, as part of a holistic update of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. In accordance with enabling legislation, ordinances should follow the established vision of this Plan.*
- When land is annexed, it comes into the City as agriculture. Some communities find it is preferable to bring land in under a specific zoning category. *This recommendation will be considered for future annexations.*
- There is some discussion in relation to doing away with the preliminary subdivision plat and changing requirements for final plats. As indicated elsewhere in this report, I believe this direction may present problems for the City. *Currently being considered as part of the Subdivision Ordinance re-write.*

B. Subdivision Ordinance (pages 34-35):

Recommendation #36: The revision of the subdivision ordinance should proceed post haste and consider the points outlined [below].

- The development community and the planners must be carefully involved in review and comment on all aspects of this effort. As noted elsewhere, the industry is generally suspect of the City and feels that their opinions are often not welcomed. Stakeholders should be brought in at the earliest possible stages of ordinance formation. *The Director of Public Works is currently meeting with members of the development community and the BLDF on a weekly basis to review proposed changes to the Subdivision Regulations. This group has been intimately involved in the process since the beginning of the year.*
- Evidently there has been some discussion about allowing plats to become final without complete construction drawings, construction, or bonding of the improvements. Based on our experience around the country, I believe this would be a mistake and can lead to numerous implementation as well as legal problems. *Methods for obtaining guarantees for infrastructure are being considered as part of the Subdivision Regulations rewrite. These concerns are also being considered at this time.*
- There has been some discussion in relation to eliminating the preliminary map process and going directly to final map. Again, I would not recommend this process. Policy reviews and discussions should take place at the preliminary stage before heavy engineering costs are incurred. *There is some interest in eliminating the preliminary plat process, which is not required by state law. As a part of this concept,*

additional requirements are being considered for master plans to ensure compliance with the Comprehensive Plan, and other policies of the City Council.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, I believe that the Zucker Report is very helpful in identifying a number of areas for improvement within the Planning & Development Services Department. It also includes areas that I believe have been significantly addressed, since Mr. Zucker's visit last December.

Most importantly, this Report provides a glimpse of the perception held by key stakeholders and customers of the Planning & Development Services Department, as of December 2004. It is my opinion that significant progress has been achieved since that time. However, I also agree that it takes time to reestablish a healthy level of teamwork and trust among all parties involved in the development process. Effective partnerships and sincere efforts to strive for improvement will lead to great results.