



September 18, 2013

Greetings,

The staff and management at the Bellingham Permit Center are constantly striving to improve service for our customers. One of our main focuses in this effort is to find ways to reduce the time it takes to approve a building permit application. We've found that the single most common issue is the lack of complete information about the project. The result is that the applicant is notified of the missing information, whereupon the application goes into a holding pattern until that information is provided. This single item accounts for the vast majority of significant delays in permit issuance.

Over the course of many months we've tried to identify the common items that need to be provided at permit application intake but for whatever reason are often missing or incomplete. As a result, we've determined that the information needed can generally be broken into two categories. Those categories are what information is needed to actually conduct a plan review and what information is needed to approve a building plan. For the most part, we're limiting the discussion to buildings designed under the International Building Code (IBC) rather than buildings such as houses and their accessory structures which are designed using the International Residential Code (IRC).

To increase the percentage of permit applications that are approved during a single review, we will be requiring (at a minimum) the following information with all IBC building plans:

New Buildings and additions to existing buildings

- For additions, the designer must identify if they intend to utilize the International Existing Building Code (IEBC). If this information is not provided it will be assumed that the IEBC will not be part of the design or review.
- For buildings larger than 4,000 sq. ft. the seal and original signature of a Washington State licensed architect or engineer.
- Building height, number of stories (including basements), and total square footage.
- The proposed occupancy classification (as defined by IBC Chapter 3) of each separate occupancy in the building as well as the square footage of each.
- For mixed occupancy buildings, information as to whether or not the occupancies are intended to be separated or non-separated as defined by IBC Chapter 5.
- The proposed construction type as defined by IBC Chapter 6.
- The location of the proposed building on the property as well as the location of this building in relation to any other buildings on the property.

Construction details for new buildings and additions

- Whether or not the building is being protected by a fire sprinkler system and if so, what the NFPA classification of that system is.
- Whether or not the building is being provided with manual or automatic fire alarms.
- Whether or not the building is to be built using conventional light wood frame techniques as defined by IBC Chapter 23 and if not, structural calculations will be required. Such calculations must be sealed and signed by a Washington State licensed architect or engineer. Out of state seals will not be accepted.
- Section drawings showing all construction details for foundations, floors, walls, roofs, shafts, stairways and ramps as appropriate.
- Floor plans detailing the use and size of each space.
- Energy code compliance information detailing the thermal envelope (including floors, walls, roofs, windows and doors), lighting budgets, as well as heat and cooling equipment details.
- Door schedules including hardware types and fire resistive ratings when applicable.
- Window schedules showing U-values and safety glazing where appropriate.

Tenant Improvements

- For tenant spaces up to 4,000 sq. ft. in size, the seal and original signature of a Washington State licensed architect or engineer will be required when any of the following exist:
 - The space contains new commercial cooking facilities.
 - The space is equipped with fire sprinklers or fire alarms.
 - There are structural alterations proposed.
 - The exit system of the space impacts exit components of other portions of the building.
- A key plan showing the location of the tenant space within the building as well as which floor or floors the tenant space is to occupy.
- The occupancy classification of the tenant space as well as that of each adjoining space.
- Height, number of stories and square footage of the tenant space.
- Whether or not the occupancies are intended to be separated or non-separated as defined by IBC Chapter 5.
- The construction type as defined by IBC Chapter 6.
- All of the construction details outlined above for new buildings and additions.

Revisions or Changes

Revisions to plans must be clearly identified on the plans. The standard method for doing so is to provide a delta symbol (Δ) with a unique numerical value identifying each revision on the plans. Each delta must be accompanied by a brief description of the change and where it occurs on the plans. All revisions should be shown in a single list format either on the title sheet or another easily located sheet on the plans. The actual item that was changed must be identified with a cloud around the changed

item. There should also be an accompanying delta with the corresponding number of the revision as identified on the revision list.

This format allows a rapid review of complete responses to plan review comments as well as to assist in quickly identifying changes at the construction site.

Conclusion

The lists above are not intended to be comprehensive or to define what a complete permit application consists of. Rather, these items are the most common that prevent an actual review of a building plan.

In an effort to provide excellent customer service by getting the projects into the review queue as quickly as possible we've found that it only increases the overall review time when the above information is not provided at time of permit application.

In the future, we will be requiring all of the information above with each IBC building permit application. Applications that are missing the required information will be deemed incomplete at the permit counter and will not be accepted for review.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Jim Tinner, CBO