



Corporate Report

NO: R078

COUNCIL DATE: May 12, 2008

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **May 12, 2008**
FROM: **General Manager, Planning and Development** FILE: **4520-01**
SUBJECT: **eGovernment – On-Line Electrical Permits**

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Development Department recommends that Council receive this report as information.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to advise Council about the implementation of a new City eGovernment initiative, "On-Line Electrical Permits", that will be activated on May 21, 2008. This initiative will allow licensed electrical contractors to apply and pay for electrical permits over the Internet, via the City's website.

BACKGROUND

In June 2006, Council endorsed the City of Surrey Information Technology Strategic Plan (the "Plan"), which included a review of the City's business activities and recommendations for increased utilization of automation, such as the Internet, to enhance service delivery. To this end, the Planning and Development Department and Information Technology staff collaborated to design a customized, leading edge, web-based (on-line) electrical permit application process.

DISCUSSION

The primary goal of the On-Line Electrical Permits initiative was to provide licensed electrical contractors, who do electrical work in Surrey, with a convenient and user-friendly way in which to conduct business utilizing the Internet. A thorough review of the current electrical permit application process was completed and modifications to existing procedures, practices and forms were undertaken to accommodate moving to a fully automated business environment.

Highlights of some of the benefits and advantages, related to the implementation of the new system, are provided below.

Key Elements of the On-Line Electrical Permits Application System

Customer Service

- Offers licensed electrical contractors a fully secure system to apply and pay for permits using a credit card (access to the system is only possible with a user ID and individual PIN number);
- Provides licensed electrical contractors the flexibility to apply for electrical permits at any time of the day (i.e., outside of regular City Hall business hours);
- The system is user-friendly, having aids such as drop-down menus, and also provides contractors with the ability to view the status and historical list of their electrical permits and associated fees paid, which can be printed and used for record/accounting purposes; and
- Enables permit applications to be done in batches and at various times, whereby the contractor can input application data for an individual permit, save the input data and log-off, later to return and complete either the application or fee payment process.

Permit Process Elements

- Automation of the application/payment process has created process efficiencies that will provide ongoing benefits in terms of automatically creating/updating the City's electronic building records stored in the Amanda database, thus eliminating the manual input of information by staff; and
- Workflow demands will be reduced by automation through decreased volumes of telephone inquiries; manual permit issuance and the physical processing of permit fee payments.

Other Key Elements

- All of the design work related to the permit application/payment process, forms, web pages, Amanda modifications and a web "shopping cart" feature were done in-house, rather than by external vendors, through collaboration between staff in the Planning and Development Department and Information Technology Division;
- Future external customers (several large electrical contractors) conducted the final testing of a proposed On-Line Electrical Permits system through real-time usage;
- The On-Line Electrical Permits system places the City of Surrey at the leading edge, among other BC municipalities, of user-friendly, web-based on-line electrical permit application processes;

- The system supports the City's positive image as a customer service-focused organization and contributes to its reputation as an attractive place to work and do business; and
- The system creates a solid platform from which further advances can be made in the automation of the permits and inspections request process, ultimately leading to the automation of all on-site inspections and approvals.

CONCLUSION

The primary goal of On-Line Electrical Permits eGovernment initiative was to provide licensed electrical contractors with a convenient and user-friendly way in which to conduct business with the City, utilizing the Internet.

The On-Line Electrical Permits system, which will be activated on May 21, 2008, will offer licensed electrical contractors self-service capability for permit application, and will serve as the corner stone for expanded e-business opportunities in the building permits and inspections functions.

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