

Item 20-0334: Request to Approve Community and Economic Development / Public Works Re-organization

Human Resources & Information Technology Committee

Wed, Apr 12, 2023 6:30PM

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 01:00

We have no public hearings or appearances. So, we will move to our action item number 23-0334 request to approve Community and Economic Development and Public Works reorganization.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 01:16

Move for approval.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 01:17

Okay, and I understand that Director Homan is going to speak to us about this?

Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 01:21

Sure. So, for those of you that were just at CEDC, you're going to hear the same thing again. But I do have Dani here. So, Dani, if I miss anything, just chime in.

Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 01:32

So really the impetus of the proposed reorganization, the route in terms of the timing of it, has to do with all the leadership changes that have been happening in both Public Works and Community and Economic Development, both at the director and, more importantly, the deputy director level. With regards to the table of organization change that moves the inspections division and staff over to Community and Economic Development, they had previously reported to Ross Buetow, the Deputy Director of Public Works, who did a really great job running that function. His last day was last week. On top of that, I was also looking at some shifting around of reporting structure within community and economic development in light of promoting David Kress to my deputy.

Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 02:18

So, I think Dani and I just kind of started talking, and we had this epiphany that the timing is really perfect. Inspections oversees building inspections, zoning code enforcement, erosion control, and a variety of things that have some overlap with Public Works for sure. And we'll have to continue coordinating with them and Fire and Health from a regulatory perspective. But the greater overlap is actually with Community and Economic Development, in terms of who we interface with, the customers, and the primary regulation of private property and private land. So, we both mutually determined that it was in the city's best interest to move forward at this time.

Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 03:01

So, in terms of the overall structure, what's changing is the Inspections Division is moving out from under the Deputy Director of Public Works slash City Engineer table of organization structure, to reporting directly to me. The support staff will continue to be part of the shared pool that we call our customer service team. That will continue to be housed in Public Works. That team is already doing some support for my department by our assessors function, a couple other things, phone calls, customer traffic. So, we're going to leave that as is. It's working really well.

Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 03:37

And then the other major change not related to inspections is where the planners report to. Previously, the planning team reported directly to the Community Development Director, and given David's expertise in planning and our desire to do more integration of Planning and Community and Economic Development, we're creating what I would call Planning and Development Division that will all report up through David. Any questions?

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 04:03

Thank you. Any other directors have any comments that they'd like to add. I see Director Ratchman, but I'm going to go to Director Block first, just because they slid the microphone over there.

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 04:14

Thank you, Chair. I just think it's important to emphasize that although we're making the switch of Inspections over to—or proposing the switch over to Community Development, our two departments are still going to work very closely together. And I think Director Homan and I are very committed to having those lines of communication open and working together on inspection matters.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 04:37

Thank you. And Director Ratchman, did you have something to add?

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 04:39

Sure. I just—two things I like to add. One is when you look at Public Works, it's a really large department. You have your operation side and you have the engineering side, and so you're taking nine direct—or nine employees and moving them over to Community Development. So, I think from a workload standpoint—and I'm not trying to say that Community Development doesn't have enough work. But the shift of the nine staff, it seems to make sense from that standpoint as well.

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 04:40

The other thing is (and I know it's been stated already) but this was not a forced change. This is really two department directors who got together, talk through the change, made sure that it made sense for the organization, and there was a lot of energy and discussion that went behind it. So very collaborative, which from an HR standpoint, you like to see that versus like a forced change of the table organization. So.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 05:26

Thank you. Any que—oh, I see lots of questions. Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 05:31

Thank you, chair. It sounds like this is best for Appleton. And if this is best for Appleton, I think that we have no problem with that. I am interested to know what the staff—what the staff feels about this. If there's been any feedback in that regard.

Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 05:50

You wanna talk about the meeting we had?

Director Danielle Block (Department Of Public Works) 05:51

Yeah, sure. All right, I'll provide just some insight. We've rolled this out first, had a meeting with the deputy directors, and just brought him up to speed. Ross was still here at that time. So—and Pete was onboarding and working on taking the reins from Ross as well. From there, we met with Inspections Supervisor, Mr. Kurt

Craanen, and talked through the change with him and how to best present to his team. And then we brought the entire inspections team in in person with Director Homan and I, and give them a idea of the timeline, the reasons why, how the process would look, and then open it up for any questions and discussion. I think it was really well received. I think just the assurance that their workload and you know, getting business done, as usual, is still going to occur, and customer service being a top priority as well. So, we're trying to make things more efficient and smoother and give staff the support and resources they need.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 06:59

Thank you.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 06:59

Thank you.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 07:01

Alder Alfheim, did you have a question?

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 07:02

Yes, please. I think that, again, my second term through this again, I think it sounds great. I think it sounds like two organizations individually working together to maximize talent and position and more efficient communication if nothing else. I think that's great. My question to Director Ratchman is, is there any shuffling in the budget as far as numbers or anything that we need to worry about or ask questions about or is it pretty much just say move it and not worried about it?

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 07:27

It really is. It's a move, it's taking the positions from one department and the budget associated with that and move it in over. But it is cost neutral.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 07:37

Beautiful, thank you.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 07:38

Set it and forget it.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 07:41

Alder Thao.

Aldersperson Maiyoua Thao (District 7) 07:42

Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to say that I'm very happy to see this partnership and collaborations within the team with two department. And also, one I'm very happy to see is that giving that leadership role to others too and, you know, putting together and it's like, to me, it's like, you know, like sharing that that leadership. And it's not like just one specific, or, you know, for you to take all the workload but you share that with others and train others to help you within that department. And it's a very, very good collaboration. So, I'm glad to see it. Thank you.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 08:28

I would just like to add, I love to see the cooperation between departments. I think it's great. And I especially like it when the HR Director says, "Oh, you know, I don't have to I don't have to do anything about this," I just sit here, and he actually let me know ahead of the meeting that Director Homan would be speaking to this. And just

on another note—and I congratulated each of them individually—but congratulations on the promotions to Deputy Director Kress, and I talked to Pete at Plan commission. So, thank you all.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 09:07

Alright, if there are no other questions or comments, we'll go ahead and take a vote having a motion and a second. All those in favor, please signify by saying aye. Aye. That passes five zero.