



WASHINGTON STATE ASSOCIATION OF PERMIT TECHNICIANS

Fall 2008
Newsletter

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NEXT NEWSLETTER
Spring 2009



A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



The WSAPT Board and Committee Chairs would like to thank the members and participants attending the 2008 Fall Conference. We hope that each of you had an enjoyable and educational experience. Please take a moment to thank those who allowed you to attend so they understand how important educational opportunities are to your professional growth. Thank you to those of you who turned in surveys, these surveys assist our association in providing you quality educational topics of interest as well as assisting us in providing you an enjoyable conference experience.

A BIG thank you to all the volunteers who assisted us with the registration and registration materials as well as the hospitality rooms, you are all great!

For those members who signed up as committee volunteers, we will be in touch with you within the next few weeks and thank you for your commitment to the organization.

Congratulations and welcome to our new Board Members, 1st Vice President; Nettie Wagner, 2nd Vice President; Laurie Jackson and Recorder; Win Slota, also thank you for your support as I enter my final term as your President.

In our continued commitment to providing educational opportunities for our membership, WSAPT has expanded our educational selections this year by adding two one day courses: "Six Topics in a Day" and "The Permit Technician Certification Study Course." These one day course options may be selected by members who are unable to attend overnight conferences due to work constraints. Please remember to visit our website for the latest information concerning upcoming events and educational opportunities @ www.wsapt.org.

I would like to express my thanks to WSAPT members, volunteers, Board and Committee Chairs for making the past two years so successful and informative! We have raised the bar once again for our association and our profession.

Judy

Building Safety Week Celebrated in Yakima!

By Judy Pozarich, WSAPT President

Yakima County Sr. Project Coordinator

Yakima County Public Services acknowledged this year's Building Safety Week by holding several events which included: Cody the Cougar and Sparky the Fire Dog visiting a local pre-school to instruct young students on the importance of building and fire safety; holding a fire extinguisher usage demo day at the courthouse; and, displaying promotional safety information for courthouse



visitors during the week. Yakima County's "Beat the Street" event, which featured our own Building Official, Dave Saunders, Inspector Jeff Burkett (Cody the Cougar), and Plans Examiner Suzanne DeBusschere (Sparky the Fire Dog), encouraged passing vehicle occupants and visitors to remember the importance of fire safety. Thanks to the Washington State Association of Permit Technicians, Yakima County was awarded one of the "Building Safety Kits" that were offered as part of the annual WSAPT Community Outreach

Program. Yakima County has offered similar programs during the Central Washington Home Show and State Fair events and plans to continue to make this event a priority in the future to ensure the safety of our residents.



A SPECIAL THANK YOU!

The WSAPT Members would like to extend our sincere appreciation for the dedication and hard work of **Sandy Wirth** as our Association Newsletter Chair for many, many years. Sandy is stepping down to seek other ventures outside of government at the end of this year. We appreciate all that you have done to improve the Association and it is hard to find the words to express our gratitude. *We will miss you Sandy!*



Best Practices for Local Government Permitting

By Sandy Wirth, City of Issaquah

The Washington State Governor's Office of Regulatory Assistance (ORA) recently sponsored three regional meetings related to local government permitting. ORA will publish a *Best Permitting Practices Report*, based on feedback received from these three meetings that captures:

- Optimizing the permit process;
- Successful permitting tools, techniques and strategies;
- Practices that increase predictability, efficiency, and collaboration in the permit process;
- Unique permitting needs of a small and large jurisdiction;
- Special circumstances or customer needs to consider when developing or changing permit processing practices.

As the economy slows, ORA is charged with the task of finding ways to smooth the development permit process to stimulate economic vitality. In 2007, the state legislature added a factor required for funding various projects and boards that has to do with whether a jurisdiction has developed and adhered to permit process guidelines designed to provide applicants with clear information and predictable turnaround times (Senate Bill 5508, as amended by the House). ORA needs to demonstrate to the legislature compliance with this new funding consideration and must report on local permit processing. Uncertainty in government process, such as a citizen experiencing difficulty in permitting an activity, erodes confidence in government.

I attended the ORA regional meeting held in Tacoma on April 9th. I was impressed with the ideas, strategies, and practices that different jurisdictions discussed related to the permit process. While every agency or jurisdiction present approached the permitting process in a different manner, the ideas shared were innovative and exciting. As an aside, it was also good to see that the City of Issaquah is already utilizing many of the innovative ideas, including pre-application Meetings, consultant reviews, and participation in mybuildingpermitn.com and the eGov Alliance.

I gathered the following information from this session and highly recommend that your jurisdiction participate in these discussions, should ORA continue to sponsor them.

PROCESSES THAT WORK

Inquiry

1. Create an early collaboration between the applicant and jurisdiction to improve permit predictability.
2. Identify local and regional permits and sequencing of those permits.
3. Maintain a website with current information (i.e., current forms, code, turnaround times, fees, costs).
4. Conduct Pre-application Meeting and Pre-application site visits.
5. Establish a list of preferred consultants who consistently provide accurate and complete submittals.
6. Establish a list of consistent coalition of permits and permit requirements between jurisdictions and agencies. (eGov coalition was used as an example)- ORA could set the standards for permit types and requirements. ORA could:
 - a. Establish a list of common land use definitions and applications;
 - b. Encourage multi-jurisdictional standards and effort by monetary reward or recognition;
 - c. Provide matching funds or grants to smaller jurisdictions to improve the permit process.
7. Provide educational classes in the permit process to developers and citizens as an outreach program.

Intake/Review/Decision

1. Provide intake checklists.
2. Provide and utilize electronic permit tracking software, embedded with electronic measurement tools (reports) and the ability to custom design screens, permit types, fees, activities, conditions.
3. Utilize concurrent staff review.

4. Establish a single re-submittal and re-review response.
5. Provide timely comments.
6. Consolidate the SEPA and land use process.
7. Deliver adequate staffing for expected level of service.
8. Ensure that permit fees cover staffing levels.
9. Establish a bottom line of staffing level and don't go below it.
10. Require upfront cash deposits from applicants who have previously defaulted on payments or fees.
11. Establish and update a list of third party reviewers, available to applicants, to accelerate the review process and deal with overflow permitting:
 - Jurisdictions can pool their consultant and resource lists and make them available for use by all.
12. Adequately fund the permit process.
13. Obtain "buy-in" into the permit process from all reviewing departments and have one high placed individual manage/mediate the permit process for all these departments.
14. Create a "Consistently Prepared Applicant" list that may expedite intake and sufficiency review for applicants on the list.
15. Expedite the review process by allowing the applicant to pay staff overtime.
16. Review Code Concerns and Sufficiency Review letters to see what issues are repeatedly listed and make sure clear direction for those issues are listed in submittal requirements.

PROCESSES THAT DON'T WORK

1. Inadequate staffing levels and staff turnover.
2. Continued non-participation in the permit process by key reviewing departments.
3. Unclear Comprehensive Plan and codes.

Got Permit Techs Shirts for Sale!

They're here! If you would like a 'got Permit Techs' shirt, contact Judy Pozarich @ judy.pozarich@co.yakima.wa.us. Shirts are heavy-weight cotton by Hanes offered in black with white lettering and white with black lettering.

'got Permit Techs' T's are available in the following sizes and price:

Black short sleeve and White short sleeve - \$10

- Medium thru XL (Ladies cut)
- XL & XXL (men's cut)

Black long sleeve and White long sleeve - \$12

- Medium thru XL
- XL & XXL (men's cut)

☞ Add \$4.00 for postage to all orders.



Have you ever thought about expressing appreciation to a WSAPT member who has shown outstanding service within his/her jurisdiction, WSAPT, community or other venue that promotes public safety and customer service? Now is the time to nominate a fellow WSAPT member for **WSAPT MEMBER OF THE YEAR**. Complete the nomination form attached to this newsletter, send it in, and see if your candidate wins! The winner will be announced at the **2009 WSAPT Fall Conference**.

WSAPT MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

There is no better time to join the Washington State Association of Permit Technicians! WSAPT is an exciting and educational organization designed to assist Permit Technicians succeed in their profession by providing training, networking, support and educational opportunities.

MEMBERSHIP WITH A PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION:

- Promotes and supports the ideals of the ICC.
- Educates members on the International Building Code, International Residential Code, and other related Codes procedures.
- Promotes development of professional skills.

EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR THE PROFESSION OF PERMIT TECHNICIAN:

- Permit Technician educational conferences and training days held throughout the year.
- A wide variety of meeting topics specifically designed to educate participants.

CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS FOR ICC CERTIFICATION

- Obtain CEU credits by attending conferences, serving as a board or committee member.
- Access to the WSAPT Lending Library of study materials for obtaining certification.

EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS FOR MEMBERS AND CHILDREN OF MEMBERS

- One \$250 award per year for higher learning scholarships for members and children of members.
- ICC Permit Technician Certification fee paid for members of jurisdictions that do not cover the initial cost of passed certification testing. (two per year)
- Seminar Attendance Scholarships

NETWORKING with other jurisdictions offering technical support and resources. These resources are used frequently by our members to help develop new processes or forms.

WSAPT NEWSLETTER & WEBSITE offers articles on self-promotion, educational opportunities and insight into other areas of interest that permit technicians deal with. The website offers a discussion and survey board, education opportunities available and all the latest news and updates from WSAPT and other ICC chapters around the nation.

WSAPT MEMBER PROMOTIONAL ITEMS, membership certificate, member directory (great for networking!), incentive gift each conference.

WSAPT OFFICER / COMMITTEE & MEMBER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES, Remember, WSAPT is only as good as its members. You can make a difference by contributing to this organization by volunteering!

PLEASE VISIT THE WSAPT WEBSITE FOR OUR 2009 ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Best Practices in Electronic Plan Submittal, Review, Tracking and Storage

By Sandy Wirth, City of Issaquah

The following information was summarized and paraphrased from, White Paper on Best Practices in Electronic Plan Submittal, Review, Tracking and Storage, prepared by the Alliance for Building Regulatory Reform in the Digital Age, a public/private partnership to enable state and local governments to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Building Codes Administration and Enforcement, www.natlpartnerstreamline.org,

Architects and engineers design buildings on paper or computers. Copies are printed out, rolled up and delivered to local building departments where they are reviewed, either sequentially or concurrently, by different technical areas and agencies. When the plans don't comply with construction code, they are corrected, returned to the applicant, and then the re-review process begins. Building construction can only begin when the plans are finally approved, which can be many months after the initial application submittal. With the onset of the internet, large screen computer screens, and demands from an increasingly technical client base (architects, engineers, contractors, building owners, and homeowners), electronic plan submittal, review and approval of construction permits by building departments may not be a futuristic fantasy.

The benefits to e-plan submittal, tracking, review and storage to government agencies are myriad:

- Through reduction in traffic trips between city hall and the applicant's office, permit processing times may be reduced between 20-50%;
- Government services are available to the applicant online 24/7/365;
- With the review time savings, staff can be shifted to other areas of government;
- Accuracy will improve;
- Revenue will be increased by getting the buildings on the tax record faster;
- Concurrent plan review will be the norm (as opposed to sequential review);
- Burgeoning space requirements will be eliminated or reduced, since bulky plan sets will be gone;
- Plan review timelines and employee staff time can be accurately measured and tracked;
- Plan review can be performed remotely, saving the jurisdiction and employee time, traffic trips, and the cost of gasoline while reducing traffic congestion, pollution, and urban crowding;
- Loss of plans through natural disaster like floods, hurricanes, and fires will be reduced because the plans are sitting on a server in a remote, safe location.
- Inspection staff has the ability to download plan information in the field and accelerate the inspection and occupancy process.

So, while the benefits to launching an electronic plan review process appear never ending, what is prohibiting most jurisdictions from implementing an electronic plan review process? Below is a simplified summary of why jurisdictions are not jumping on the bandwagon of electronic permit review and processing.

The first, and perhaps the most obvious, barrier to electronic plan review implementation is access to adequate funding – changing the way one does business costs money and many building departments are financed through the general fund. However, jurisdictions that have successfully implemented an electronic plan review process, operated as an 'enterprise' funded agency, and the fee structure was established to build in the costs of their e-plan system. The fund was kept safe by statutes making it illegal to use building department fees for non-building department purposes.

Other barriers to implementing electronic plan review are:

- Lack of technical information, expertise and support within the jurisdiction;
- Inability to locate/acquire hardware and software that can share data;

- Lack of support from customers, citizens, and city councils;
- FEAR OF CHANGE for both customers and staff (would you rather have a root canal without drugs than change the way you currently perform your job duties?);
- Why change? Don't fix what's not broken.

To become more efficient managers entrusted with the enforcement of building code and public safety standards, while at the same time improving both the speed and quality of the building regulatory process, we need to seriously consider moving toward an electronic review process. Technology currently exists to complete technical reviews of all the relevant codes, including electrical, mechanical, plumbing, structural, and fire. What can we do now to start moving toward this goal?

1. Identify and gain support from your stakeholders (e.g., review staff, customers, clients, code and jurisdictional administration). Maintain a strong working relationship with these individuals.
2. Identify the existing permit process (workflow) and work toward implementing an online permit process where simple applications are submitted, reviewed and issued online. In others words, start small and work your way up.
3. Create a concurrent plan review model between departments.
4. Implement a centralized web/file database server that provides a single access point.
5. Create electronic forms that automatically populate based on data being entered into the permitting database.
6. Create an electronic workflow model that controls the transfer of information between the applicant(s) and review staff.
7. Provide access to electronic versions of current building, fire, plumbing, mechanical, and energy codes.
8. Decide which document type to accept electronically and in which format. A document can be submitted in *original* format or in a *converted* file format.
 - a. Converted files can be an image like a PDF file and provide less information than an original file;
 - b. Original files are feature rich but can be large files that require protection due to their high intellectual property content.

There is no doubt that shifting from a paper based application submittal and review process to an electronic one is a major undertaking for any jurisdiction. To read the white paper on which this article is based, entitled On Best Practices in Electronic Plan Submittal, Review, Tracking and Storage, go to the *Alliance for Building Regulatory Reform in the Digital Age*, at www.natlpartnerstreamline.org and click on 'White Paper on E-plan Process.' We're not in Kansas anymore, Toto.

WSAPT Educational Class Survey:

Please complete the attached *WSAPT Educational Class Survey* designed to assist the Education and Administration Committees in selecting and scheduling possible educational opportunities for our 2009 conferences. This is important so send in your survey! Send surveys to: judy.pozarich@co.yakima.wa.us

WSAPT Membership Dues

Annual WSAPT membership dues are \$35.00 and help with the costs related to our educational conferences. Membership period is January 1 through December 31 each year. The Membership Dues form as well as the Membership Application can be found at: <http://www.wsapt.org/>.

Mail your \$35.00 check and completed membership form to Ellena Hazen, City of Yakima, 129 N 2nd St, Yakima, WA 98366. Make the check payable to: Washington State Association of Permit Technicians or WSAPT.

Communicate the Value of Your Conference Experience

If you're like many people attending the WSAPT Training Seminar, you rely on your jurisdiction or company to cover the expenses of your attendance. Whether or not you need to seek approval to obtain funding from your jurisdiction or company, it's important to understand and communicate the value of your training experience to your organization. These five steps to obtaining funding will help you secure funding, and help you maximize the investment.

Five Steps to Jurisdiction/Company Funding

Below are five good ideas to consider when you approach your jurisdiction or company for funding. Try one step, or try all five, but choose an approach that makes sense for your unique situation:

Step One:

Speak up!

- ✓ Talk to your supervisor about the benefits of the WSAPT Training Seminar. Be sure to discuss specific ways in which your attendance will benefit the jurisdiction or company.

Step Two:

Put your plan on paper.

- ✓ When the schedule is available, choose specific sessions that apply to your position and objectives. Use the tools that are available on this site to print out your plan and share it with your supervisor.

Step Three:

Make sense of the dollars.

- ✓ Your registration expenses will depend on your goals. Decide whether you need to attend the entire seminar or just one day in order to achieve those goals. Also factor in your hotel, travel and meal expenses. Note: Is money the make or break issue? Try attaching a dollar amount to savings you earn through the techniques you learn in the education sessions.

Step Four:

Remember to follow-up.

- ✓ After the seminar, make sure you report on your seminar activities, including sessions you attended and people you visited. What did you learn about? Did you get any ideas that will help you be more effective & efficient?

Step Five:

Revamp the "Buddy System."

- ✓ If your jurisdiction or company already sends one or more people to the WSAPT Seminar, consider reasons to send one more. Is your area of expertise different from your colleagues who currently attend? Remember, the WSAPT seminar education benefits professionals at all levels and a trip to the WSAPT Training Seminar is perfect for team building and mentoring.

Benefits to You and Your Jurisdiction/Company

Consider these powerful benefits of the WSAPT when pitching seminar attendance to your supervisor: Your whole team will benefit from the tips and expert knowledge you gather at WSAPT seminars.

- ❖ If you're new to the industry, WSAPT is the best way for you to make connections that can help you be more effective in your position.
- ❖ Many Permit Technicians, Building Officials, Reviewers and Inspectors will be there. By joining them, you'll learn from your peers and keep the playing field even.

Thank you to the **North Central Texas Permit Technician Chapter** for the above ideas!

WSAPT DONATES SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Thanks to the generosity of our members at the fall conference, WSAPT was able to donate quite an assortment of needed school supplies. The supplies were donated to Education Service District #105 Special Education Department who found several families in need to share these supplies with.

WSAPT Members Care!!!! Thanks everyone!



WSAPT WEBSITE - VISIT IT!

WSAPT can be accessed at:

www.wsapt.org

Some features of our new website include:

- History of our Association
- ByLaws and other informational brochures
- Current officer and committee chairs of the Association
- Certification information
- Membership area that includes:
 - ✓ Lending Library (*check out publications to assist you in obtaining your PT certification*)
 - ✓ Forms, policies, agendas, minutes, newsletters
- Photos
- Events (*list of events, training seminars and additional opportunities*)
- Employment opportunities
- Contact information
- Links to other websites

We are happy that we can provide this tool to our members and visitors viewing our site and hope that it will be a benefit to all.

If you have any questions about the website, please contact the webmaster at:

judy.pozarich@co.yakima.wa.us

WEBSITE LINKS

WSAPT Website www.wsapt.org

State of Washington Home Page
www.access.wa.gov

Washington State University Energy Program
www.neec.net/resources/resources.html

Index to Washington State Agencies
<http://access.wa.gov/agency/agency.aspx>

State Fire Protection Bureau
www.wa.gov/wsp/fire/firemars.htm

Underground Tank Clean-up
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/ust-lust/tanks.html>

Washington State Emergency Management Division
<http://emd.wa.gov/index.htm>

Washington State Department of Ecology (jobs, law, rules, permit assistance, SEPA, Environmental Education, GIS Training)
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/ecyhome.html>

Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife (hunting, fishing, licensing, education, enforcement)
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/>

Department of Labor and Industries - Contractor Licensing
<https://fortress.wa.gov/lni/bbip/>

International Code Council (ICC) www.iccsafe.org/
Certification: 1-866-422-3926
Membership: 1-866-422-5646
Washington Field Office
2122 112th Avenue NE, Suite C
Bellevue, WA 98004
1-800-231-4766 or 425-451-9541
On-line Education: <http://www.icccampus.org/>

Washington Association of Building Officials www.wabo.org

Colorado Association of Permit Technicians www.cocapt.com

Kansas City Metro Association of Permit Technicians
www.kcmapt.org

Minnesota Building Permit Technicians Association
www.mbpta.org

Ohio Permit Technicians www.marysville-ohio.com/BPTechs

Oregon Association of Permit Technicians www.optaonline.org

North Central Texas Permit Technician's Chapter www.ncptc.org

Washington State
Association of Permit Technicians
is an accredited member of the International Code
Council.



Setting the Standard for Building Safety™

WSAPT Website
www.wsapt.org