



February 8, 2010

Dear Portsmouth Civic League Presidents and Members:

Over the past several months the Department of Permits and Inspections looked at the service being provided to residents and believed that rotating the Area Inspectors would provide a fresh set of eyes in each community. As we began this process we realized that the quality of work and the relationships that the Inspectors had with each community was good; we just didn't realize how good until we received both praise and concern in regards with the rotation. With this in mind, the Department of Permits and Inspections realized that additional public input would be highly desirable, so in this regard, please find attached a synopsis of our rotation initiative which includes a time line that allows for citizen feedback.

Please provide comments to this office by March 1, 2010. Your ideas can be conveyed to us by either emailing Theetta Raynor at raynort@portsmouthva.gov or by mailing them to:

Building Official
Department of Permits and Inspections
801 Crawford Street
Portsmouth, Va. 23704

Thank you in advance for your help with this issue.

Sincerely,

Douglas K. Smith, MCP; Building Official
Director of Permits and Inspections

cc: City Manager
Paul Holt

Department of Permits & Inspections

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Code Enforcement Initiative

With respect to the City's interest in enhancing code enforcement service delivery, City Staff has begun communication of an action to include rotation of Code Inspectors. Realizing the duration of time passed since the City's last action of rotating Code Inspectors coupled with public concerns raised at a recent meeting of City Council, the City Manager with the concurrence of the City Council has interest in establishing an opportunity for more public collaboration.

The rotation of inspectors is a common management practice throughout the code enforcement industry and since this tends to be a slow time of the year, it was a perfect opportunity to make the changes before the weed season begins. The reasons for doing so are many and include: 1) Providing a greater degree of familiarity of the different communities and this in turn creates a form of cross reference and training so that staff can more readily shift from one area to the next if a coworker is absent for any reason. 2) Area rotation provides the inspectors with a broader perspective of property maintenance, zoning, and nuisance code enforcement throughout the City rather than limiting them to a permanent area. 3) Rotation also allows for quicker response times in emergency damage assessment since the inspectors will be more familiar with different areas. 4) It allows the inspectors to foster new relationships within the community. 5) Providing a fresh set of eyes in the community. 6) Helping staff from becoming complacent.

The Civic Leagues brought forth the following concerns: 1) Rotation could compromise the character of the Historic Districts. 2) Current inspectors are experts in the areas of the City they are assigned to and a rotation may result in reduced services. 3) It takes too long for an inspector to foster the type of relationships needed to gain community trust. 4) The Civic Leagues had no previous input in the decision making process. 5) Other ways of ensuring consistency of enforcement should be explored. 6) Damage assessment and geographic familiarity are simplistic processes that do not warrant rotation of inspectors.

For the time being the rotation of the Area Inspectors has been placed on hold. Over the next few months Staff and the Civic Leagues will collaborate to come up with options to maintain adequate service delivery while maintaining a multi-disciplined staff. Permits and Inspections will contact all Civic Leagues to obtain their input and apply their feedback to the final decision. Staff and the Civic Leagues will meet again on May 18, 2010.

Timeline:

February 8, 2010	Distribution of Information to Civic Leagues
March 1, 2010	End of Civic League Comment Period on Rotation Proposal
April 30, 2010	Review of Civic League Comments by Staff Completed
May 18, 2010	Follow-up Meeting with Staff and Civic Leagues