



Whatcom County Planning and Development Services

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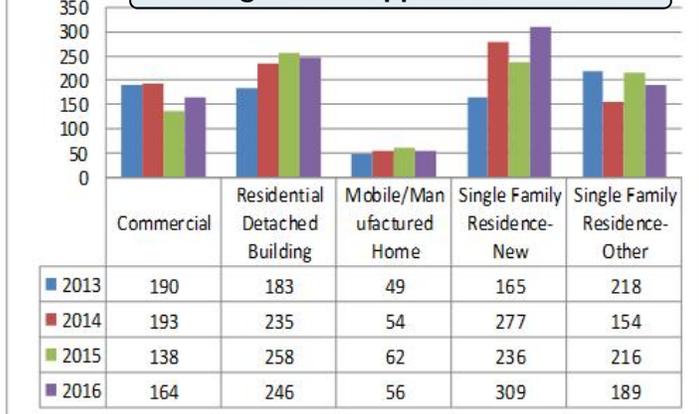
Director—J.E. "Sam" Ryan

2016 Year End Report & 2017 Goals

2016 In Review

We had a very busy year at Planning and Development Services (PDS) in 2016. There were new and unexpected challenges related to water availability that have involved a great deal of staff energy and expertise to address. PDS continues to work their way through the process along with Council, the Health Department and our legal counsel. In general our permit numbers were slightly up in 2016. As always we continue to evaluate and adjust our processes and procedures working to find the best possible outcomes for our customers.

Building Permit Applications 2013-16



◆ **Building Permits 2016**

◆ **Issued**

- ◆ Commercial 169
- ◆ Residential (new) 453
- ◆ Residential (other) 290

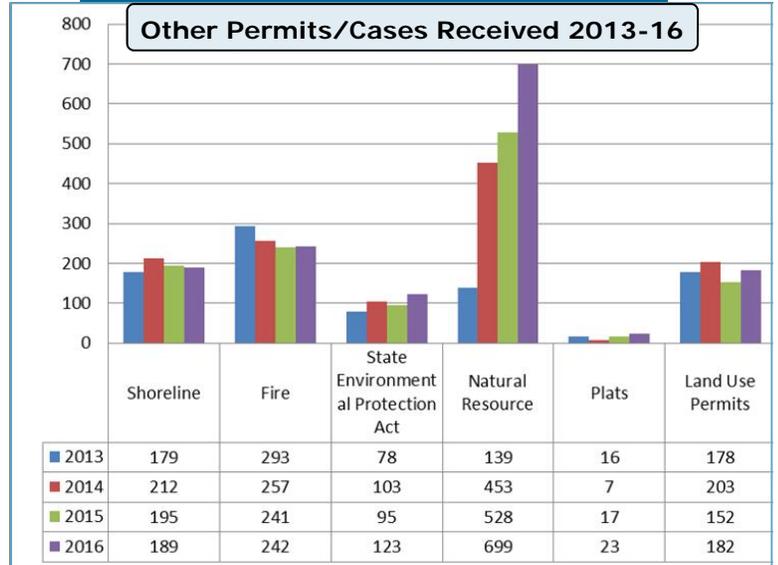
◆ **Received**

- ◆ Commercial 164
- ◆ Residential 800
- ◆ Fire Permits 242
- ◆ Plumbing/Mechanical 648

◆ **Other Permits/Cases Received in 2016**

- ◆ Shoreline (all) 189
- ◆ Natural Resource Permits 699
- ◆ Discretionary Permits 182
- ◆ Plats 23

Other Permits/Cases Received 2013-16



"To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often." ~Winston Churchill

Here are some highlights of our staff activities in 2016:

- ◆ Our Permit Center has maintained a high volume of permits reviewed as "Quick Permits"—approximately 2/3 or better of our overall building permit volume is ready for issuance within 1-3 business days following a submission of a complete application.
- ◆ Our Fire Marshal's Office investigated 77 fires in 2016.
- ◆ A draft Ordinance was submitted to adopt the 2015 editions of International Building Codes including amendments to Whatcom County Code, Chapter 15.04.
- ◆ Building Services issued the permits for a remodel at Nooksack ES; an extensive remodel and expansion at Nooksack HS; several ongoing projects at both BP & Phillips 66 refineries; a large berry cold storage facility; a large repair/replacement project at Petrogas West Cherry Point facility; a new cheese processing facility; a number of marijuana processing facilities; and numerous other commercial projects.
- ◆ Fire Marshal's Office (FMO) has continued the interlocal agreement with Northwest Clean Air Agency (NWCAA).
- ◆ Long Range staff Submitted the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update to Council and worked with them for approval of the Comprehensive Plan in August 2016.
- ◆ Long Range worked with a variety of advisory committees—forestry, surface mining, agricultural, and a new Council created Wildlife Advisory Committee.

- ◆ PDS staff worked with Information Technology, Health Department, Public Works and the Executive's Office on a committee to select a vendor for a new software solution to replace our current Tidemark System. RFP responses were received by Finance in December 2016.
- ◆ Long Range facilitated the state mandated 2016 Critical Areas Regulations Review and Update review by the Planning Commission and their recommendations were submitted for Council review starting in September of 2016.
- ◆ PDS staff in all divisions worked with Council, the Health Department, Executive's Office & legal counsel to develop regulations and solutions in the wake of the Supreme Court decision in Whatcom County v. Hirst, et al.
- ◆ As the local economy continued to improve, permit activity and inquiries regarding development increased keeping Current Planning staff busy.
- ◆ Natural Resource (NR) staff received 537 Natural Resource Assessments last year in addition to reviewing other NR permits, building and discretionary permits. NR staff continue to review and refine their processes.
- ◆ A cross departmental team began work on review of Code Enforcement policies and procedures with the development of updated policies and development of proposed code changes.
- ◆ Long Range staff focusing on the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program have secured multiple PDR requests from the Agricultural Community and acquired almost one million in federal matching grants in the past two years to purchase agricultural easements.



Long Range Staff worked with Recreation Conservation Office Farmland Evaluation Committee in August 2016.

Personnel Updates

2016 was a busy year for PDS staff and we have a few staff changes—we had 3 staff leave PDS over the course of the year. ***Our new PDS Staff:***

- ◆ **Annette Collins** is the new Planner I for Code Enforcement. Annette came to us from within Whatcom County from our Maintenance and Operations Department.
- ◆ **Kyla Walters** is the new Planner II in Shorelines. Kyla came to us from the City of Bellingham and also had worked for Island County as a Planner.
- ◆ **Robert Eckroth** is the new Planner I in the Permit Center. Robby came from Grant County where he was working as a Planner.
- ◆ **Thomas Brissenden** is a former PDS intern returning to Planning as a Natural Resource Planner working in cooperation with Public Works with the Pollution Identification and Control (PIC) program. Thomas came to us from the Washington Conservation Corp.

We wished farewell to the following staff in 2016 and send them our thanks for their work for PDS: Erin Osborn, Matt Reider, and Alex Cleanthous.

2017 Goals

- ◆ PDS will complete the Code Enforcement Committee work with a goal of submitting updated code for review by the Council.
- ◆ PDS will continue the process of developing a Workforce Plan to help define departments goals, prioritize staff skills, identify key positions for rapid replacement and work to improve training and staff engagement.
- ◆ The Permit Center staff will continue to work on the permit application and review process to streamline to quickly process permits for issuance.
- ◆ PDS will continue to work with the committee to select and implement a replacement permit processing software system. This system will provide more capability for the public to interface with the system and get historical and current permit information.
- ◆ Building Services will work with Council to adopt the 2015 Code update and staff will train to adapt to the new codes.
- ◆ Natural Resources staff will continue to streamline and adjust the NR permit application process to reduce permit review times.
- ◆ Long Range staff will be facilitating the County Council adoption of state mandated 2016 Critical Areas Regulations.
- ◆ Long Range staff will continue to support and improve the County's water resource protection strategies and better integrate land use and water resource planning.
- ◆ PDS Staff will continue to work with advisory committees and interested public to improve our growth management and land use policies and regulations in light of emerging issues and the changing needs of our population.

"Progress cannot be generated when we are satisfied with existing situations." ~ *Taiichi Ohno*

PDS plans to continue to focus on our customers with the goal of providing superior outcomes and service. We are working to focus on our interaction not only internally but also with other departments to ensure the best possible work flow. We are looking forward to a productive and busy 2017!