

# **Board of County Commissioners**

## **Agenda Request**

Date of Meeting: April 7, 2009

Date Submitted: March 20, 2009

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Benjamin H. Pingree, County Administrator  
Lindsay Stevens, Assistant County Administrator  
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Subject: Request Board Consideration of Development Permit Application (DPA)  
Process Streamlining Analysis by the Planning and Community Development  
Department

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### **Statement of Issue:**

This agenda item requests Board consideration and evaluation of the Development Permit Application (DPA) process currently used by the Planning and Community Development Department with a goal of improving and/or streamlining the process.

### **Background:**

A DPA is required prior to the issuance of any building permits, and prior to the commencement of most development activities within Wakulla County. The issuance of a DPA is a required first step in the permitting process for all new homes, mobile homes and commercial structures. DPAs are also required for repair/replacement projects such as re-roofs, AC change-outs, electrical upgrading, installation of power poles, installing electrical services to accessory buildings, interior re-modeling, window replacements, renovations, and more.

The process to obtain a DPA is handled in the Planning and Zoning Division, where staff obtains information about the particular piece of property including zoning, land use, and flood zone information. Upon issuance of the DPA from Planning and Zoning, the applicant then goes to the Building Division to obtain a Building Permit.

There have been multiple citizen and Board of County Commissioners inquiries regarding the process of issuing DPAs and whether it can be streamlined. Staff from the Planning and Zoning Division have reviewed the DPA process and evaluated the elimination of the DPA requirement for certain repair/replacement projects such as HV/AC replacements, re-roofing, and other minor repairs.

**Analysis:**

The staff of the Planning and Zoning Division reviewed and considered the benefits of streamlining the DPA process to eliminate DPAs for certain repair/replacement projects, such as HV/AC replacements, re-roofing/roof repairs, window replacement and other minor repairs, and have compiled the following pros and cons, outlined below:

*Positive and Negative Implications of Eliminating Certain Repair/Replacement DPAs*

Pros:

- **Improved Customer Service** – Applicants would only be required to go to one place (the Building Department) for Permits, saving time.
- **Financial savings** to each applicant of the \$30 DPA fee.
- **Reduction of staff time spent** processing DPAs.

Cons:

- Planning staff would be unable to monitor **unauthorized land splits** of the property.
- **Flood zone elevations** of the property would not be determined, nor considered, during permitting, as this is only provided by the Planning staff.
- Reduced ability to monitor **Code violations**.
- **Loss of County Revenue** – Significant income would be lost if permits were not issued for repair/replacement projects.

Table 2 lists all DPAs issued for the past two years, by category:

**Table 2: Wakulla County Development Permit Application Issuance – 2007 and 2008**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total DPAs Issued</b>	<b>Single-Family Home Construction Permits</b>	<b>Mobile Home Permits</b>	<b>Commercial Permits</b>	<b>All Others</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>1541</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>733</b>
<b>2008</b>	<b>938</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>784</b>

Based upon the data set forth above in Table 2, if DPAs were to be issued only for new home construction, mobile homes, and commercial construction, there is a potential revenue loss of approximately \$23,520. This calculation is based upon the 2008 total of All Other Permits (784) x \$30 for each DPA fee. When construction activities increase again, the loss per year will likely be substantially greater.

Additionally, elimination of the repair/replacement DPAs will inhibit the ability of the Planning and Community Development Department to ensure compliance with the Land Development Code and other County Ordinances. In fact, various sections of the Land Development Code require the issuance of DPAs such as Section 8-2(gg)(1)(2)&(3) *Wakulla County Code*. In addition, Section 11.053(b), *Wakulla County Land Development Code*, specifically requires a DPA for any development within a special flood hazard area and does not distinguish between minor (for example a re-roof) or major (new construction) development activities. Furthermore, Section 5-11(2)(a), *Wakulla County Code*, requires a site plan to be reviewed by the County for any alteration to a building. Site plans are reviewed by the Community Development Department, and approved site plans are attached to DPAs for reference by the Building Department. This is to ensure compliance with setbacks, etc (Attachment #2). Based upon the analysis, Planning and Zoning staff does not recommend completely eliminating the DPA process for certain types of development permits.

After review and analysis, staff would like to present an alternative way to streamline the process for certain DPAs without eliminating the DPA process for those activities. Staff recommends that the Board consider the creation of an additional Expedited DPA form for specific accessory repairs that requires a less extensive review than the current DPA form. Specifically, HV/AC repairs/replacements, window repairs, and reroofs/roof repairs would be the only development activities eligible for the expedited DPA. Additions onto existing buildings, installation of sheds and other similar development activities would still be required to go through the standard DPA review process.

The new Expedited DPA form would include the following: a check box indicating which activity is being permitted, the property owner's name and address, the wind speed zone, and the flood plain of the Subject Property. This new form would provide the information required by the Building Department in order to determine building parameters while shortening the waiting period for the issuance of these specific DPAs. Staff believes that providing a limited review of a particular development project through an Expedited DPA form will comply with the provisions of the existing *Wakulla County Code* requiring Planning review prior to issuance of site plans or development permits, but also serves to save the time of applicants. In addition to saving the time of the applicant, an expedited DPA will also allow repairs to existing structures that promote the health, safety, and well-being of *Wakulla County* citizens.

If the Board elects to direct staff to begin revise the DPA process, staff would further recommend the Board consider inclusion of an expiration date or lifespan for all DPAs. Currently, there is no definite time period for DPAs and it is not uncommon for a DPA to be quite old before an applicant attempts to receive a Building Permit. This can be problematic, as the regulatory environment is in a constant state of change and the outdated DPAs will not reflect the current requirements of the *Wakulla County Code* or Florida Statutes. Staff would recommend an expiration date of twelve (12) months for all DPAs issued by the Planning and Zoning Division.

**Options:**

1. Accept the Planning staff's recommendation and create an expedited DPA form for air conditioning repairs/replacements, window repairs/replacements, and reroofs/roof repairs, as well as create an expiration date/life span for DPAs of twelve (12) months.
2. Direct staff to amend the existing practice of issuing DPAs to exclude certain repair/replacement construction projects and prepare draft revisions to the Wakulla County Code that will solidify these changes.
3. Board Direction.

**Recommendation:**

Option #1

**Attachment(s):**

1. DPA Form
2. Cited Sections of the Land Development Code

[LS:pj:gk]