




Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development  
**Planning Division**

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**TO:** Common Council Organizational Committee

**FROM:** Bradley J. Murphy, Planning Division Director 

**DATE:** August 4, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Comments on Making the Development Assistance Team Subject to Public Meeting Requirements

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Subcommittee of the Common Council Organizational Committee with comments on the possibility of making the Development Assistance Team subject to public meeting requirements.

First let me provide some background on the creation of the Development Assistance Team. The team has been in existence for at least 20 years. The original purpose of the team, formally called the Interdepartmental Staff Team, was to bring agencies together that were involved in the development review process for projects requiring approval from the City's Plan Commission and/or Common Council. The team met twice each month prior to Plan Commission meetings to review and compare comments on projects to resolve outstanding issues or conflicting recommendations between agencies prior to the project being considered by the Plan Commission or Common Council.

In 2006, Mayor Cieslewicz asked the Department and interagency team to review the development review process with the intent of making recommendations to improve the services provided by the departments and divisions involved in development review. The inter-agency team issued a report in August 2006, which included many recommendations for improving the review process. One of the recommendations was to create a Development Services Center (aka the one-stop shop) which would include a virtual web-based center as well as a physical location within the remodeled lower level of the Madison Municipal Building. One of the interim improvements recommended by the team was expanding the role of the Interdepartmental Staff Team to provide an opportunity for early consultation with applicants prior to the applications being finalized and prior to their formal submittal to the City.

The Development Assistance Team meets on Thursday morning on an as-needed basis and schedules meetings with developers/applicants and their consultants in addition to fulfilling their original mission, which was to review and coordinate comments on development projects prior to being heard by the Plan Commission and Common Council. The Development Assistance Team does not have a set number of members and includes a wide agenda distribution list of approximately 50 individuals from various agencies. Fifteen or so of those on this list attend each meeting, and some attend more regularly than others depending the items being reviewed. The role of the team was expanded to provide for better coordination between agencies prior to applications being submitted and to allow developers and their

consultants to obtain initial technical comments on development proposals from agencies such as Traffic Engineering, City Engineering, the Fire Department, Zoning, Planning, the Assessor's Office, Real Estate, Madison Metro, and others prior to the applications being submitted. Prior to this, developers met individually with agencies which made it more difficult to coordinate the development of projects and to resolve potentially conflicting advice being provided by each agency.

One of the benefits of the team is to provide a forum for informal discussion with technical/line agency staff related to the ordinance requirements and design standards which must be met for projects which are eventually submitted. No formal actions by the team are taken, there is no voting, and there are no minutes. The team was not intended to be a forum for public comment or involvement.

My concern with requiring that these meetings be public meetings, is two-fold. First, the additional requirements create another burden on staff to prepare and post public meeting notices, agendas, with the possible requirement to prepare minutes. With a potential for public comment periods during these meetings, I am concerned with the potential to significantly lengthen the meetings (the meetings currently last an average of 2 hours), which will in turn discourage inter-agency staff from attending. Secondly, the meetings have been designed to allow developers to meet with staff from many City agencies to obtain technical comments and feedback on the plans prior to the plans being finalized for formal submittal. (This is just one of many steps in the development process.) If developers stop utilizing these meetings, they will revert back to meeting individually with each City agency one at a time prior to submitting their application. This would defeat the purpose of the expansion of the role of the team and one of the key recommendations for the creation of the Development Services Center (one-stop shop).

Staff should continue to have the ability to meet collectively with customers on an informal basis to discuss projects without being subject to public meeting requirements. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with the Committee to discuss these concerns prior to any decision being made on the Development Assistance Team.

Thank you.

c: Mayor David J. Cieslewicz  
Mario Mendoza, Assistant to the Mayor  
Michael May, City Attorney  
Larry D. Nelson, City Engineer  
David Dryer, Traffic Engineer  
Ed Ruckriegel, Fire Marshall  
Charles Kamp, Madison Metro  
Si Widstrand, Parks Planning Supervisor  
George Hank, Neighborhood Preservation and Inspection Division Director