BUDGET COMMITTEE REQUEST:

Staff report the current speed for issuing building permits for industrial and commercial buildings and what resources would be needed to improve the turnaround time for issuing these types of permits.

Staff report on options to increase the speed of the building permits, including residential permits, amounts that fail and financial investment to help this.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- That the information be received.

KEY FACTS:

- 1,895 building permit applications were accepted (YTD as of August 30/2024)
- The average time required to issue building permits for both residential and non-residential projects, ranging from accessory units to high rises, is 31 business days
- 38% of BPINs (permit requests) required more than one submission
- For industrial buildings, delays are related to meeting applicable law
- Improved communication tactics for applicants
- The Building department experienced several vacancies in 2024

COMMENTS/OPTIONS:

As of August 30, 2024, Building Services accepted 1,895 building permit applications ranging from backyard decks to 20 storey condominiums. While the total number of permits remains steady in comparison to previous years, the complexity of the applications received is increasing and submissions for permit applications are often premature and/or incomplete. When less qualified designers, or owner designers, are used it requires more back and forth between staff and the applicant and often leads to slower review times. To illustrate this, 38% of permit application requests went through more than one pre-screening cycle before being accepted for permit review.

Regarding timeliness for industrial buildings, according to our findings, where any delays were found, they appear to be related to approvals required to satisfy applicable law – such as site plan approval or site servicing or related to mechanical systems.

The average time required to issue building permits for both residential and non-residential projects, ranging from accessory units to high rises, is 31 business days, which is a significant improvement from previous years. For instance, in 2023, the

issuance time for non-residential permits averaged 45 days, while residential permits took about 54 days. The time needed to process permits varies based on application complexity, completeness, and the time applicants take to make necessary revisions. Over recent years, about 40% of applications submitted have been incomplete, which has contributed to these delays.

To help applicants, brochures have been developed to explain the process and provide links to the many websites that offer design assistance. This information can be found on our website. We are engaging designers earlier, taking greater responsibility to ensure that our requests are understood and that a response arrives in a timely manner. And finally, a new electronic plan circulation tool will also launch in early 2025 that will simplify communication with applicants and provide greater transparency so that the designer/owner will see the status of the approval. We believe that when our approval process is transparent, the designer/owner will take a more active role in ensuring a permit is not delayed.

In addition to the above, the department had several staff vacancies in 2024 which contributed to approval timelines. Six vacancies were filled this year, including a Building Services Representative which directly impacts permit intakes.

Given the above, requests for additional resources are not being requested at this time.

Staff look forward to providing a more comprehensive report on the approval process and communications system in early 2025.