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Work group helping to improve Town's permitting process

Town of Fort Myers Beach, FL – The permitting process has been a topic of much discussion lately as many property owners continue rebuilding after Hurricane Ian.

At the suggestion of some community members and with the support of Interim Town Manager Keith Wilkins and Town Council, a permitting work group has been formed to regularly discuss and implement ways to improve the processes involved in securing a permit for rebuilding.

This work group consists of Town staff in the Community Development Department and representatives from the community who are general contractors, builders, and users of the permitting system. Industry members will rotate in and out to gain a diverse perspective. This group has met twice and will meet several more times to discuss what is working well and what needs changed.

“Process improvements have already been implemented,” said Keith Wilkins. “These include expanding permitting desk hours through March 29 to earlier mornings, later evenings, and Saturdays, and adding eight contracted permitting technicians to the Town’s previous two. Improvements also include providing assistance in the receptionist’s area with a public computer and printer, and re-organizing and adding to the Building Services webpage to provide more detailed information and make it more easily used.”

The website includes updated requirements on many applications and provides more than 100 pages of information to help the community navigate the permitting process. An extensive frequently asked questions list and a resource library with dozens of helpful publications, guides, and links is also now available. Here’s the link: <https://www.fortmyersbeachfl.gov/971/Building-Services>

Other suggestions from this work group that are longer term and will be evaluated once the current improvements have time to work and be evaluated:

- Add a zoning representative to the group;
- Simplify review process for driveway permits as far as that is possible while ensuring that the site plan requirements for the proposed construction meet code requirements;
- Hire plans examiners in-house instead of using a third party service to help with speed, control, cost, and customer service.

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