



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: December 15, 2015

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Building & Safety Division, Community Development

SUBJECT: Contract Building Plan Check Services

RECOMMENDATION: That Council:

- A. Approve the execution of a \$70,000 Professional Services Agreement with Bureau Veritas North America, Inc., for contract Building & Safety plan review services; and
- B. Authorize an increase in Fiscal Year 2016 appropriations and estimated revenues in the Community Development Department, General Fund, by \$70,000 to cover the cost of the contracted services, funded from increased and unbudgeted revenues generated from greater than expected building permit activity.

DISCUSSION:

Thorough and timely building permit plan reviews help the community establish and maintain a safe, accessible, and healthy built environment. One means of providing thorough and timely reviews of the State's Title 24 Building Standards and local amendments during busy periods is through the use of contract building permit plan check services.

Since 2014, the City's Building & Safety Division continues to encounter pre-recession levels of building permit plan check activity. For the first four months of this fiscal year, building permit applicants have requested plan review services at a volume that is beyond the capacity of the City's Building & Safety Division full-time staff, even after authorizing short-term periods of overtime. The long-term reliance on over-time authorizations is avoided as it has detrimental effects on performance and customer service. Until the City has seen a consistent and ongoing increase in the need for permanent building permit plan check services, it is most prudent to utilize high quality contract building permit plan check service providers. Consequently, during these periods of high plan check activity, the City can utilize the following options:

- Authorize longer terms of overtime compensation for existing staff at the risk of staff “burn-out”
- Increase the number of permanent City plan check staff and increase the long-term salary overhead
- Increase the amount of contract plan check services until a clear need for additional permanent staff is seen
- Decrease plan review customer service levels (longer review times, or lower accountability for compliance with the standards) at the risk of public health and safety

After completing the City request for proposal process, Bureau Veritas North America has been selected as the Building & Safety contract plan check services provider. Bureau Veritas North America Inc. has a remarkable reputation as a contract building permit plan review service. They provide similar services to over 100 agencies in California, offer their services at the most reasonable cost of all proposals collected, and received excellent ratings from the agencies that staff contacted prior to making this selection.

Approval of the requested budget adjustments and the Bureau Veritas North America Professional Services Agreement will assure that the City’s Building & Safety Division continues to provide valuable and timely building permit review services to our architects, engineers, and contractors.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

The current Building & Safety budget for building permit revenues are \$2,814,773. Revenues for the first quarter of this fiscal year are trending \$92,000 higher than the budgeted amount. In addition, the very busy Planning processes, which leads to the Building & Safety building permit plan check process, suggest that this trend will continue throughout the foreseeable future.

This request is unique in that the \$70,000 Professional Service Agreement expenditures will be spent only after the associated additional revenue has been collected. This assures a fiscal balance between additional revenue collected, additional services requested, and additional expenditures for service.

A copy of the contract/agreement is available for public review in the City Clerk’s Office.

PREPARED BY: Andrew Stuffer, Chief Building Official

SUBMITTED BY: George Buell, Community Development Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office