



MEMORANDUM

TO: Deschutes County Board of Commissioners
Nick Lelack, County Administrator

FROM: Peter Gutowsky, AICP, Community Development Director
Sherri Pinner, Sr. Management Analyst

DATE: March 9, 2022

SUBJECT: New Administrative Assistant Request

I. SUMMARY

The purpose of this memorandum is to request the addition of one (1) new administrative assistant in Community Development Department (CDD), Planning Division to provide additional resources in managing the increasing volume of land use applications and appeals. The Planning Division contains two operational areas: Current Planning and Long Range Planning. Current Planning consists of one (1) planning manager, one (1) principle planner, ten (10) planners and one (1) administrative assistant.¹ They are responsible for reviewing land use applications for compliance with Deschutes County Code (DCC) and state law, including zoning, subdivision and development regulations, and facilitating public hearings with Hearings Officers and the Board of County Commissioners. Staff is also responsible for verifying compliance with land use rules for building permit applications and septic permits; coordinating with the Code Compliance Division to respond to complaints and monitor conditions of approval for land use permits; perform road-naming duties; and providing assistance at the public information counter, over the telephone and via email.

II. PERMIT VOLUMES & PROJECTIONS

During calendar year 2021, land use applications increased 25% and appeals more than doubled at 122%, over 2020. Applications tend to be more complex, representing matters of first impression such as the Thornburg Destination Resort and wireless telecommunication applications than in the past, requiring a significant investment in staff resources.

¹ CDD is currently recruiting for a Senior Planner and has offered employment to two (2) Assistant Planner positions. One has accepted effective April 1, the other is contingent upon Human Resources review.

Graph 1 highlights land use applications over a ten (10) year period.



Graph 2 highlights land use applications appealed over a seven (7) year period.



Issues:

- Administrative responsibilities related to the volume of land use applications exceeds the capacity of a standard workweek.

- When out of the office, coverage for the administrative assistant duties default to assistant planners or administrative assistants within other CDD divisions. For the time-period November 2021 through February 2022, administrative assistants in other CDD divisions worked 165.75 hours of overtime to provide coverage.
- Recent Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) cases reveal the need for higher level of scrutiny to ensure accuracy and clarity of documents submitted to reduce record challenges.
- The Planning Division is experiencing a high rate of staff turnover. Five (5) of the seven (7) planners presently employed in Current Planning (not counting three vacancies) have one and half years or less length of service.
- The administrative assistant in the Planning Division began employment in January 2022.

III. FINANCIAL IMPACT

The initial total cost of the new position would be an estimated \$85,500, which includes annual salary and benefits (\$83,000) plus computer (\$2,500). CDD's current budgeted revenues will cover the cost in the current and future years.

IV. BOARD DIRECTION

Approve/deny the addition of an administrative assistant.