



CITY OF MEDINA

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Date: January 13, 2025
To: Honorable Mayor and City Council
Via: Stephen R. Burns, City Manager
From: Steven R. Wilcox, Development Services Department Director
Subject: Development Services Department Monthly Report

Permit Activity and Development Services Fund

2024 permit activity finished slow as it had been most of the year. As previously mentioned, the construction value listed in the December 2024 Issued Permits report reflects higher volume due to work carry-over from later 2023.

We did perform more building inspections in 2024 than 2023 (1,511 vs. 1376) and that is also due to the work carry-over. The inspection numbers are actual, but the permits issued are skewed by late 2023 applications.

A typical year prior to COVID for permitting was busy the first quarter, then again in the late second or third quarters. Since COVID we have not seen much predictability.

Maybe 2025 will be different, but we budgeted conservatively for a continuation of low volume. We did conduct a pre-application meeting for a proposed new 8,000 sq. ft. house which is something we did not see at this time last year.

The 2024 year-end financial numbers will be sent out by our Finance Department in January and that will give us more insight.

Development Services Staffing

Development Services Coordinator

I previously mentioned in this report that our Development Services Coordinator, Rebecca Bennett will be on maternity leave for about 4-months in 2025. Rebecca's baby is due in early February.

We conducted interviews with temporary staff candidates provided through an agency. We made a selection and will have a temporary staff member starting with us on Tuesday January 21st. We need about a week overlap for training with Rebecca, but since the exact date she will begin maternity leave is unknown the amount of training is too.

Rebecca anticipates being on leave until early June 2025.

Building Official

Rob Kilmer will be introduced to you as our new Building Official. Rob has been our Deputy Building Official since he started work with Medina in May 2020 and was given the new title and responsibilities on January 1, 2025.

Typically, there is about a 5-year training and experience period for building officials after college. Rob came to us with minimal experience but has excelled. I believe that Rob will be a leader in the Washington State building department community in the near future.

I was hired in September 2007 as Medina's Building Official. Construction activity dropped along with the housing bubble in 2008. In 2008 the City of Clyde Hill found that it needed a building official. Because of the economy related work load reduction in 2008, Medina decided to share me with Clyde Hill through an interlocal agreement which continued until spring of 2014. I was both Medina and Clyde Hills building official for over 6 years. I became Medina's Development Services Director in April 2018 following Robert Grumbach.

From April 2018 until January 1, 2025, I had two titles and the associated responsibilities of two full-time positions. At times the amount of work has been overwhelming and I always felt I could not produce the quality or quantity of work product needed for either of my two jobs. I have felt that my ability to perform was affected.

As Rob has developed experience and skills he took an increasing amount of my building official duties. Rob has earned his new position, deserves this promotion, and the recognition for working so hard to get where he is. I am relieved and happy to have Rob as our Building Official. I hope to now have more time to perform tasks that Council wishes, that I know need to get completed, and at a quality level that satisfies all of us.

Professional Consultants

In 2025 there will be some changes in how we work with our consultants. New contracts and revisions in contract renewals will be with the goals of better control of costs and efficiency in administration. Legislative changes such as new permitting rules of SB 5290 recently approved by Council will also guide how we work with our professional services consultants moving forward. There is education and mentoring to do.

Planning Manager Report

Jonathan G. Kesler, AICP, Planning Manager

No written report. Our Planning Manager will answer questions that Council members may have during the allotted Development Services verbal report time.

Telecommunications Permit Applications

We have received two sets of permit applications from American Tower Company.

The ten existing pole locations that were discussed as a part of the recent Council franchise approval are now with us. These applications have been determined to be complete and are now routed for review under P-24-080 Administrative Special Use.

Existing interior equipment within the enclosed second floor of the Medina Public Works building will be changed by T-Mobile. We have a building permit application for this work. Medina has a lease with ATC for the use of this space.

Tree Permits

Council had asked for improvements to the monthly Tree Permit Activity Report. We added permit numbers to the report which will make for easier public records requests. When we have permit applications, we will provide copies of those with these staff reports.

Potential Tree Removal Application

Our Arborist Andy Crossett was asked by a resident about the possibility of removing 4 trees on their developed property. We have not received a permit application to remove the trees, but I expect that we will. All 4 trees appear to be healthy.

The 4 are all 'legacy trees" (36"-50"). The sizes are 37" to 46" diameter. Medina Municipal Code 16.52.080 defines Legacy Trees.

Our MMC allows for these trees to be removed within certain conditions including:

- Issuance of an approved City of Medina Tree Activity permit.
- Issuance of a Construction Activity Permit with rules including worker parking and work hours.
- Issuance of a Right of Way Use permit as may be needed for temporary large truck or equipment staging.
- Site noticing per MMC 16.52.150.
- Pre-removal meeting with our staff.
- Meeting MMC 16.52.110 Restoration Standards which include 79.5" of replacement trees.

Subject to review of a complete permit application, it does not appear from what I currently understand of this matter, that there is anything that will prevent the legal removal of the 4 trees.

If Council is concerned about this then you may wish to assign the task of reviewing the applicable code sections to the Planning Commission through use of their calendar. I would want to take lead on this with assistance of our Arborist and City Attorney.

T-Mobile Monopine Concealment Proposal

I have mentioned previously that T-Mobile has applications with us under planning project reviews for their existing tower and equipment facility on the East side of Evergreen Point Road at about the 2800 block. This facility is on Bellevue School District property. Generally, the project involves replacing the existing 'can' type antenna and tower with a taller tower which is proposed to be concealed to appear as a tree (monopine). A monopine is a faux tree.

The question regarding the proposed monopine concealment remains. At this point the decision on whether to approve the monopine proposal will be going to the Medina hearing examiner with a neutral staff report.

Beyond the process outlined in our Municipal Code I am not able to require additional noticing or solicit additional input on the monopine proposal. Without input from residents the staff report will be factual and given to the hearing examiner for his decision. I have no personal opinion about the monopine concealment proposal. I would like to assure that Medina residents understand the scope of the T-Mobile proposal so that they can give their comments prior to the hearing. Comments will help guide the drafting of the staff report for the hearing examiner to consider. Without resident comments I have no formal guidance and would take a code based neutral stance in the staff report. Without resident comments I would not know if the monopine is something that is desired by the city, or not. Because of the visual impact of the monopine I feel that this is a significant matter, however I am tied to the limits of our code regarding my ability to gain additional resident input.

There is noticing required for the non-administrative special use (P-24-071) and the height variance (P-24-070) applications. Residents will be notified as required by the permit applications, but only to the limits of the Municipal Code. In my opinion, an aware person would need to make effort and read the submitted project plans carefully to understand the monopine proposal.

The hearing date for this application has not yet been established.

Development Services 2025

Medina's Development Services Department will be very busy through 2025. Beyond the long-range work of Middle Housing legislation and the associated Medina Municipal Code amendments needed for proper implementation, we are mandated by the state to update our Critical Area Ordinance by next December 31st. It is possible there will be other state mandates as well for us to work on.

Development Services also has what appears to be a full schedule of administrative work (contracts, fee reviews, internal process, etc.) and various minor code amendments. Everything has process associated with it so Council will be informed through all of this and will be involved through much of what we are doing in 2025. Planning Commission will also be involved as scheduled through their calendar. There is nothing ominous about any of what needs to get done and I am happy to provide Council with details on the currently known work required for Development Services during 2025 at your request. I would need to prepare a separate report for you.