

COUNCIL WORKSHOP ITEM

ITEM: Introducing the Downers Grove E-Permit
DATE: January 28, 2003
PREPARED BY: Liangfu Wu, Director of Information Services
PURPOSE: Informational

DISCUSSION:

More than a year ago, we reported to you that we would prepare and construct our own E-permit as one of our E-government initiatives. Today, we have a fully functional online permitting system. This application drastically changed the way the Village processes permit applications. The changes can be seen the following areas:

1. The use of the Downers Grove E-permit results in a virtual centralized permit center. Residents and contractors can obtain all of permit applications in one location regardless of the locations of the processing departments.
2. Since the Downers Grove E-permit is a 100% web-based application, the application process can take place at anytime and anywhere (24/7/356). For some simple permits (e.g., fence), the applicant can fill out the application, pay for it by a credit card and obtain the final permit directly from their home or office.
3. As it only appears to be a simple online application, the Downers Grove E-permit offers a sophisticated process control mechanism under which various village departments involved can easily coordinate their work. The workflow of the permitting process is clearly defined by the system.
4. In addition to being a process control system, the Downers Grove E-permit is also an effective communication tool. Since the process is available right on the web, every step of the application process is made available for review to everyone involved. Staff will know exactly how the applicant fills out her/his application, the applicant will know where her/his application is at, and more importantly, staff members in various departments will know what staff members in other departments are doing. "Right hand does not know what left hand is doing" is a thing in the past.

Staff started using the application January 1, 2003 as the first phase of the introduction. We are still in the process of training and obtaining feedback from staff. Some minor modifications are being done currently. In the next phase, we will introduce the application to the residents and business community. Today's presentation can be viewed as the beginning of the 2nd phase. Training will be provided to residents and contractors who are frequent visitors of the Village Hall. We will work with Chamber on scheduling training classes.

Today, every local government agency is seeking to offer such E-services. However, none has an application at the level of services by our E-permit system. The key in our design is to move the entire permitting process on the web and make the process 100% transparent to the applicants. As a result, the applicants, in fact, become part of the government process, and the "counter"

between village staff and residents/contractors is removed. This is the core concept of E-government.

There are some important factors that made the Downers Grove E-permit possible. Staff members from Code Services, Public Works, FD (Prevention), PD (Traffic Division) and Finance (Accounting) work closely with IS staff. More importantly, their willingness to change and the ability to cope with major changes in their routine operation are crucial to our success.

Finally, I like to make the Council and the community aware of the fact that since we had the necessary personnel and database/programming tools available, the application did not cost additional dollars to the Village. As we offer other online services, the initial spending on software and personnel will be further justified.

When we introduce the application to the community in March of this year, you are all welcome to try the application from your home. We are welcome any feedback from you.

For questions, please contact me @ 434-5544 or Email lwu@vil.downers-grove.il.us

