

MEMORANDUM

March 11, 2010

TO: The Board

FROM: Rose Krasnow, Chief
Development Review Division
(301) 495-4591

SUBJECT: Monumentation

The purpose of this memo is to explain the monumentation process and to recommend that the Planning Department no longer offer this service to applicants. Should the Board agree with this recommendation, the Board would also need to vote to decrease the fee charged for record plats by \$100.

Monumentation is a process for establishing control points in the field so that a surveyor can be sure that his and future measurements by others are accurately based on a consistent location point. Monumentation was previously done by WSSC, who placed monuments in the field in connection with the placement of water and sewer lines and created what is known as the WSSC grid. Often, the existing monuments were not physically close enough to a site being surveyed by an applicant, so WSSC would be asked to locate additional monuments. Some time ago, however, the Planning Commission agreed to take over this task in order to ensure that we were able to capture all the data for our GIS system. In order to do this, we added a \$100 charge to the fee being charged for each record plat, and placed the funds so collected in a separate account. We then contracted with an engineering firm to be "on call" to do the actual monumentation when requests were received from applicants. Although the actual cost of placing a monument was actually significantly greater than the \$100 being charged, the fund has always contained a surplus because the number of requests received was low.

The advent of sophisticated GPS systems has made our current system of monumentation both obsolete and unnecessary. The only requests we have received of late come either from WSSC itself or from smaller engineering firms that haven't purchased their own GPS equipment and who know it is cheaper to have us place the monuments than to hire a private entity. As a result, representatives of the building industry have complained that we are charging them a fee for a service they do not need, which effectively results in larger applicants subsidizing smaller ones. Moreover, we are accumulating funds that cannot be spent given the number of requests. Although there was originally some hesitancy on the part of internal staff to drop this service given the Planning Department's desire to maintain accurate GIS layers, I recently discussed the matter again with Bobby Fleury, the IT staff person in charge of the monumentation contract, and she now fully agrees that it is a good idea, stating, "I think we can end/phase out this project without compromising the accuracy of our basemaps."

Requests for monumentation have become rarer and rarer. In FY '08, we received 143 record plat applications, but only 8 requests for monumentation. Of those eight, five were not even from an applicant; they were from WSSC. To date, in FY '10, we have received no requests for monumentation. Moreover, the timing of this request is good, because we are in the final year of a three year contract.

There is, of course, one complicating factor. Dropping this program will mean a corresponding drop in revenue at a time when funds are particularly tight. Through the end of February, we have accepted 68 record plat applications, representing total fees of \$149,600. The monumentation portion, however, is only \$6800, so the amount involved is not large. Moreover, since the funds are specifically designated, they do not really help our bottom line. The Building Industry Association is so eager to bring an end to this fee that they have stated a willingness to see us use any money that is currently in the monumentation fund for other purposes, such as helping to pay for ProjectDox.

Therefore, I respectfully request that the Planning Department discontinue the monumentation program. Should you agree, I would also request that you vote to lower the record plat fee, beginning immediately, from \$2,200 to \$2,100. Any monies that are currently designated for monumentation should be treated as fund revenue without a specific designation.