

MIAMI BEACH

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission
FROM: Commissioner David Richardson
DATE: December 14, 2022

SUBJECT: REFERRAL TO THE FINANCE AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCY COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS CREATION OF A CITY OMBUDSMAN OR “PERMIT ADVOCATE” TEAM TO POTENTIALLY RESIDE WITHIN THE OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER, AND ASSIST BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS WITH PERMITTING ISSUES AND IMPROVE COORDINATION BETWEEN REGULATORY DEPARTMENTS, INCLUDING THE BUILDING, FIRE, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY, PLANNING AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENTS, WITH THE GOAL OF IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERIENCE WITH RESPECT TO PERMITTING MATTERS.

ANALYSIS

Please place on the December 14, 2022 agenda a referral to the Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee to discuss the creation of a City Ombudsman or “Permit Advocate” Team.

Since I was first elected in 2019, one of the top complaints I have consistently received relates to the complexity and cumbersome nature of City’s permitting process. In many instances, permits require plan review and processing by numerous regulatory departments, including Building, Fire, Environmental & Sustainability, Planning and Public Works, with multiple reviewers in multiple disciplines for any given permit application.

Although the Building Department has tasked staff to assist with troubleshooting, much more needs to be done, particularly with respect to the coordination and streamlining of permit reviews across multiple departments. Accordingly, I would like for the Committee to consider whether to create a City ombudsman or “permit advocate” team to potentially reside within the Office of the City Manager. I understand that at least one other municipality, the City of Coral Gables, has created a permit ombudsperson position with its City Manager’s office, to serve in a similar capacity.

The Permit Advocate Team would serve to assist residents and businesses as they navigate through the cumbersome process and minimize permit delays, which are often costly and time-consuming. As a unit within the Office of the City Manager, the Permit Advocate team would focus its efforts on improving coordination between departments and the overall customer

service experience with respect to permitting matters.

In addition, for several years now, the City Commission has awaited recommendations from its Inspector General relating to potential improvements to the permitting process, but the Inspector General has instead focused his time and attention on pursuing other interests. As part of this referral, I would request an update from the Inspector General on the status of those long-awaited recommendations.

SUPPORTING SURVEY DATA

N/A

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

N/A

Applicable Area

Citywide

Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-14?

Yes

Does this item utilize G.O. Bond Funds?

No

Legislative Tracking

Commissioner David Richardson

Sponsor

Co-sponsored by Vice-Mayor Steven Meiner