

**JEFFERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

AGENDA REQUEST

TO: Board of County Commissioners
Mark McCauley, County Administrator

FROM: Josh D. Peters, AICP, Director, Community Development

DATE: August 19, 2024

SUBJECT: BRIEFING AND POTENTIAL ACTION Re: Commitment Letter – Paper to Digital Grant Application

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

The Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) has opened up the Paper to Digital Grant funding. A mandate of Senate Bill (SB) 5290 Section 3, codified as RCW 36.70.241, is the Department of Commerce must establish a grant program for local governments to update their permit review process from paper filing systems to software systems capable of processing digital permit applications, virtual inspections, electronic review, and capacity for video storage. All cities and counties across the state may apply.

The deadline for submitting an online application for the fund is Wednesday August 21, 2024. Commerce will evaluate the applications based on scoring of responses to grant application questions and growth statistics. All supporting documentation must be uploaded prior to completing the application. In order to make the deadline, DCD requests the Board to review the attached narrative to the scored questions, the proposed budget and the attached required letter of commitment from an authorized officer (i.e., the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners). If the Board is in support of the application, the Chair would need to sign and return the letter of commitment to DCD to be included as a part of the application packet.

ANALYSIS:

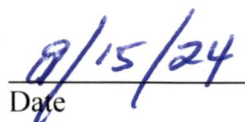
DCD anticipates using Commerce funding to defray costs associated with the ongoing transition to the full functionality of the Enterprise Permitting and Licensing (EPL) software. The Paper to Digital Grant funds will be used to accomplish the tasks described in the attached narrative; those tasks will complement objectives for the constant improvement and maintenance of the permitting process. There is no match required for this grant.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve and sign a letter of commitment for DCD to provide to Commerce to complete the Paper to Digital Grant application for work to be accomplished by June 15, 2025.

REVIEWED BY:


Mark McCauley, County Administrator


Date

Scored Questions

SYSTEM CAPACITY/VISION

(1) Provide a concise description of your current residential permit process. This should include any current challenges or issues you are experiencing in your current process and whether or not you are using an all paper system or a hybrid digital and paper system to accept and review permit applications and complete residential inspections.

Response:

Permit Process: Jefferson County is currently utilizing a hybrid permitting system. All documents must be in digital format. The Building Division will perform the application intake, which requires an appointment with a permit technician. The applicant will email or share the digital documents and plans prior to the appointment. During the appointment, the technician will ensure the application is procedurally complete pursuant to a checklist and ready at submittal. Incomplete applications will be returned or delay processing.

For most residential building permit applications, review and sign off by four divisions are required. These divisions and their review are summarized below:

- Building Division: Plan and Fire/Life/Safety review and inspection.
- Land use/Development Review Division: Consistency and Stormwater Review.
- Environmental Health: Wastewater (sewer connection to a purveyor or on-site sewer system review and approval) and potable water review.
- Public Works: An approved access is required for all county roads if approach has not been previously approved.

Attached is a flowchart showing a synopsis of the building permit process.

Challenges: Jefferson County started converting to a new permitting system (Tyler's Enterprise Permitting and Licensing "EPL", formerly known as EnerGov) while the Department of Community Development (DCD) experienced a significant staff turnover. While DCD as a whole was able to get the initial set up of EPL established, there are areas that we could improve to activate EPL's full functionality and complete the paper to digital conversion.

Building Division:

- Building Division is no longer accepting paper building plans. However, there were plans submitted prior to this policy change. Some of these approvals are still under construction, and would be beneficial to convert these paper plans and import to the permitting program digitally. The goal is to have all relevant documents to be stored digitally in one location
- EPL offers a mobile inspection platform for inspectors to efficiently manage inspections in a wireless environment. However, like most rural jurisdictions, there are areas that cellular services are poor or not available. The iPads that the Building Division currently

utilize are not compatible with the Windows based operating system; information that are stored on the County's servers are inaccessible in the field. Moreover, using the Bluebeam software on iPads proved to be a challenge. Bluebeam allows the plan examiner, the architect and engineer to mark up the same plan to eliminate duplication/confusion. Switching to a Surface Tablet will allow the parties to make amendment/correction digitally via the Bluebeam software.

- There are two additional EPL modules that would assist the Building and Fire Officials, as well as Environmental Health staff to perform their jobs more efficiently. The Fire Inspection would allow the results of the fire/life/safety inspections be recorded in real time, among other functions. The Business module would have the capability to schedule required inspections at regular intervals and send out reminders to the landowners automatically.

Land Use/Development Review Division:

- As a result of the staff turnover, not all the report templates were completed and imported to EPL. It would increase efficiency, productivity and consistency to continue the effort in getting all templates completed. The County is intended to negotiate and renew a contract with the consultant (previous contract expired in June 2024) to continue providing support for database administration, coordination of mapping with permit data and software, include reports writing.
- Configuration improvements to streamline the workflow steps in EPL to make it more user friendly for both staff and the public.
- Note that Jefferson County restarted the Customer Self Support (CSS) portal in July 2024 as a way to better inform the public on the permitting process. Applicants may schedule inspection online as well as obtain information through the CSS portal.

County IT Infrastructure:

- The County's current IT infrastructure significantly limit the conversion from paper to digital at its full capacity. The servers that are serving EPL and other programs/databases are dated, patches/updates are no longer available for some platforms. With the current infrastructure, video storage is limited. The management team is discussing the long term strategy for maintaining, upgrading and enhancing the databases.
- While Jefferson County is preparing to improve and maintain our databases and equipment, the most critical decision that need to be made in a short time-frame is to decide whether the County will move to a Tyler hosted environment or continue a self-hosted solution. While the County is prepared to support our own strategic IT planning, it would help to kick start the process by engaging with Tyler on the "Project Planning Process" (a Tyler required action) as soon as feasible.

(2)How would this grant funding provide for the capability of processing digital permit applications, virtual inspections, electronic review, and capacity for video storage? The answer to this question should include whether or not

funds will purchase software, fund research, and/or be used to create and execute a plan to move to digital.

Response:

Jefferson County is requesting a grant funding in the amount of **\$94,000**.

The County will use the fund to:

- Scan paper plans and import to EPL for all pending/active permits (Estimated cost \$5,000)
- Purchase four (4) Surface Tablets to replace the dated iPads for the Building Official, Fire Chief, Plan Examiner and Permit Technician. The new tablets would maximize the functionality of EPL's Permitting Module on and off premises. Staff would be able to take pictures/videos, take and submit notes while doing inspections in the field, access the County servers and retrieve relevant information when needed at the project site, continue working with or without wifi/cellular services and sync with office operations when connectivity is available. (Estimated costs \$10,000)
- Reimburse the County for the purchase of the Fire Inspection Module which was verbally approved by the Board of County Commissioners in early August. (Estimated Cost \$7,000)
- Allow the County to purchase the Business Module to have the capability to schedule required inspections and send out reminders to landowners (Estimated Cost \$47,000)
- Renew the contract with the consultant to provide support for database administration, coordination of mapping with permit data and software, including reports writing (Estimated costs through June 15, 2025 \$15,000)
- Engage with Tyler on the initial "Project Planning Process" to support the County's ongoing strategic planning for IT infrastructure (Quoted Cost \$9,799). This will be a positive step to allow video storage in a near future.



Board of County Commissioners
1820 Jefferson Street
PO Box 1220
Port Townsend, WA 98368

Kate Dean, District 1 Heidi Eisenhour, District 2 Greg Brotherton, District 3

August 19, 2024

Washington State Department of Commerce
Growth Management Services
Paper to Digital Grant

Subject: Paper to Digital Grant Application

To Whom It May Concern:

I, Kate Dean, Chair of the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners, authorize our Department of Community Development (DCD) to propose the attached scope of work and budget request for grant funding to implement the requirements of SB 5290 related to permit review process update grant funding.

In addition, in order to receive grant funds, we understand that this grant has the following conditions that we must meet prior to becoming eligible for this grant. We agree to the following:

- (1) **We are committed to the update of our permit review process** from paper filing systems to software systems capable of processing digital permit applications, virtual inspections, electronic review, and with the capacity for visual storage.
- (2) **We will abide by the Scope of Work agreement**, we must provide deliverables to the Department of Commerce to receive reimbursement for expenses tied to the completion of each milestone.

On behalf of the Board of County Commissions, I confirm that Jefferson County is committed to fulfill the above details and requirements. We appreciate your consideration of our request for Paper to Digital Grant funds.

Sincerely,

Kate Dean
Chair, Board of Commissioners