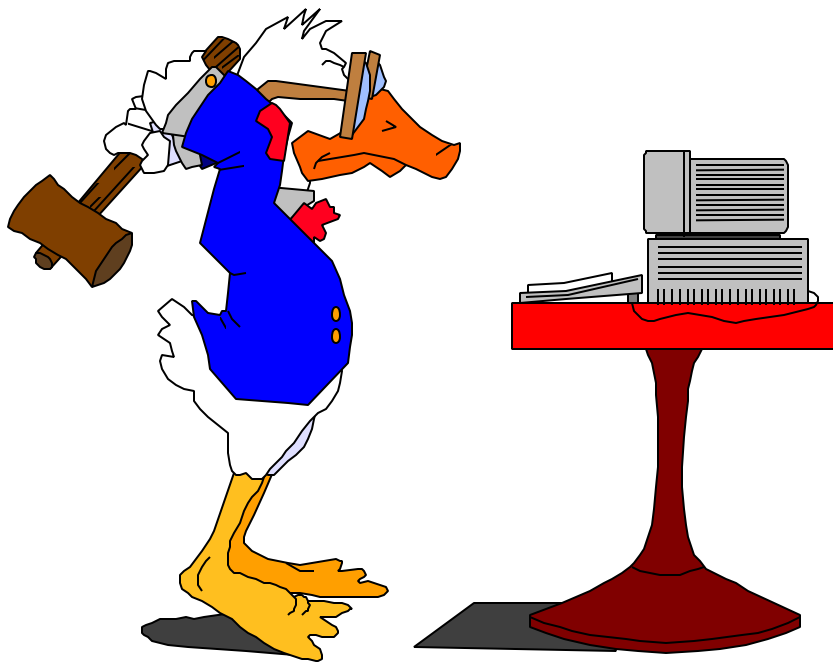


## **BACKGROUND**

In 1996 the City of Mobile created the Urban Development Department by merging three departments that were primary players in the building permitting process. Code Administration, Land Use Administration and Long Range Planning were merged into one department to help facilitate the coordination of permitting services for regulatory planning and code enforcement. This move was in response to the contractors and developers experiencing obstacles, delays, confusion and red tape when applying for a permit.

This re-organization was a direct correlation to the new approach to problem solving, Total Quality Management. This style of leadership, which was new to the City, focused on empowering the staff on the front line by giving them authority to make decisions since they interfaced directly with the customers. The end results were the maximization of City resources, improved services to the customers and implementation of a process that opened direct channels of communication.

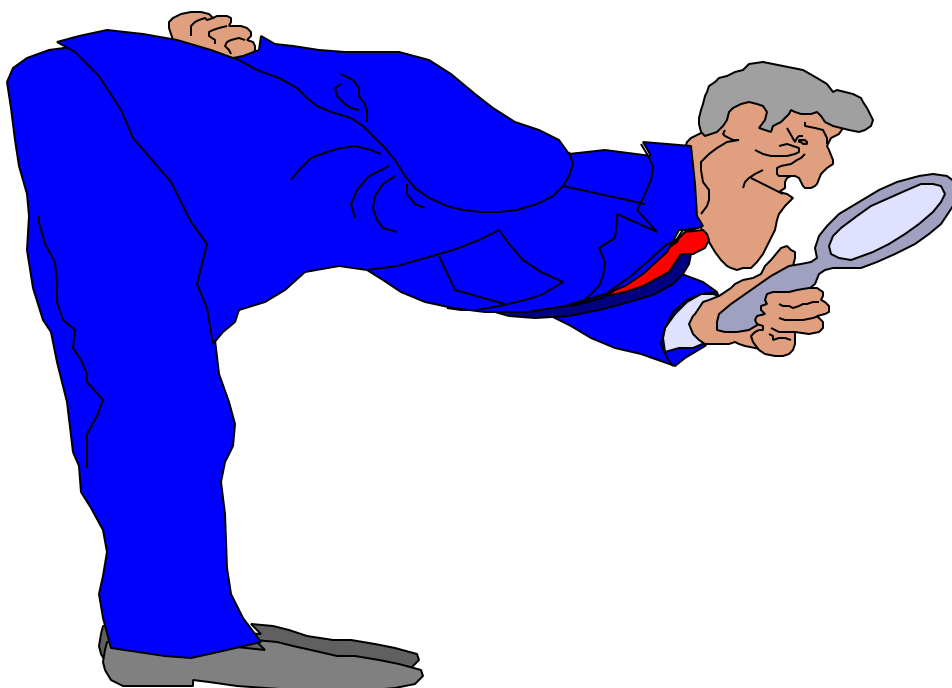
To address the construction and development community dissatisfaction with the permitting system, the City followed the lead of many cities around the country by implementing the first generation of “One-Stop Shop” model. There were two main approaches taken in implementing the “One-Stop Shop” models. One included consolidation of all departments involved in the permitting process and the other designated one-core group as the point of contact.



Those municipalities who consolidated were successful in providing more effective and efficient services to the development community. They streamlined their process by alleviating bureaucracy, inconsistencies and departmental territorial lines increasing productivity and becoming more cost-effective. The primary benefits were improved customer satisfaction and interactions.

Other government agencies such as the City of Mobile chose the designated point of contact as their approach to the “One-Stop Shop”. Several departments were located on the same floor to add more convenience for the customers. Initially, some successes were experienced, however, this approach scratched the service and many of the problems were still prevalent. There was a central point of contact, but territorial lines were still prevalent with different guidelines, different deadlines and different priorities and the communication gap did not close. The construction and development community was still experiencing a high degree of dissatisfaction with the services and permitting process. Bureaucracy and inefficiency still proved to be unproductive and costly to the community.

In an effort to improve the process, the City of Mobile conducted a study and evaluated several cities’ permitting process. In addition, meetings were held with the development community where valuable input was received and several problems were identified. As a result of the study, long term and short-term plans were recommended. One recommendation of the short-term plan was to convene a Technical Review Committee (TRC) with representation from all departments involved in the permitting process. The TRC will act as intermediary between internal and external customers helping to facilitate the streamlining of the permitting process.



## **PURPOSE**

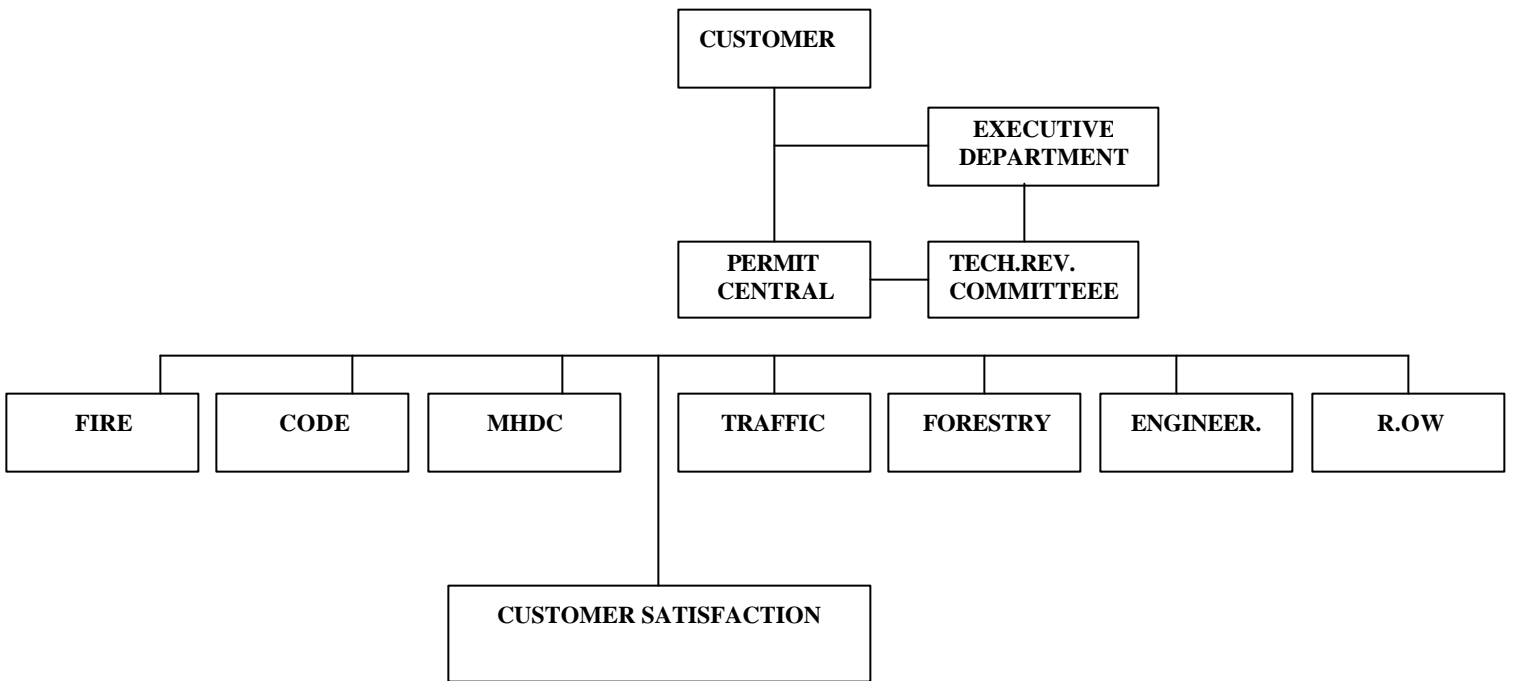


The purpose of the Technical Review Committee is to bring key players from each department involved in the City of Mobile permitting process to function as a self-directed team that places customer satisfaction and promotes efficiency over territorial boundaries.

The TRC will eventually take on a personality of its own and it will be paramount that a more efficient permitting process and enhanced teamwork will alleviate obstacles, confusion, bureaucracy and result in improved productivity, standardized policies and procedures.

# **TRC COMPOSITION**

The Technical Review Committee will be composed of various sections from Administrative Services, Public Safety and Public Services Division. Team members will include key staff personnel from the following areas that are involved in the permitting process: Code Administration, Engineering, Fire Department, Land Use Administration, Mobile Historic Development Commission, Right-Of-Way, and Traffic Engineering.



## GOALS

- To meet with developers, contractors and consultants to consistently ensure those projects meet all applicable codes, ordinances and standards adopted by the City of Mobile.
- To review plans submitted for review for permits where applicable.
- To meet and discuss status of pending plan reviews.



- To meet on a regular basis to discuss and resolve problems relating to the permitting process.
- To schedule and conduct pre-development meetings.
- To systematically review policies and procedures relating to the permitting process and make recommendations for changes.
- To enhance and facilitate improved communication internally and externally.
- To develop an express plan review process.
- To assist in standardizing policies, procedures, reviews approvals and time frames for reviews.
- To develop parameters and guidelines for the operations of the Technical Review Committee.
- To assist in further development of the website for permitting components.