



Community Development
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Chair Paul Holvey
Members of the House Committee on Business & Labor
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: House Bill 4086

Representative Paul Holvey:

It has come to the City's attention that the Oregon Legislature is considering amendments to Oregon Revised Statutes Chapter 455, prohibiting local jurisdictions from contracting for building inspection services. As Community Development Director for the City of Lebanon, I would like to take this opportunity to share our experiences.

The Community Development Department is responsible for managing planning and building activity in the City. Since October 2012, we have used the services of a private contractor for building inspection and building plan reviews. This change was made in response to a reduction in permitting activity; the City could no longer justify employing a full-time building official or inspector.

To date, we have found this to be a cost-effective way to provide building services. The individual works approximately 20 to 25 hours per week and is under my direct supervision. As with any private contract employee, the City can terminate the contract and seek another alternative. Furthermore, customer service has not declined as we are still able to issue single-family building permits within days and most multi-family and commercial projects within two weeks.

On a practical level, the service flexibility benefits the City as we only pay for the hours worked. Overall, the current contract represents an approximate 20% reduction in overhead costs, which allows us to avoid fee increases. More importantly, the contracted individual is effectively part of "our" team and has built a working relationship with Department staff and the community, something that may not readily occur if an outside jurisdiction provides the service.

There may be a time when it is necessary to hire a full-time building official or inspector. Until that time arrives, the current arrangement has proven to be an excellent, and cost-effective way, to provide building services. Therefore, it is our hope the Committee carefully considers the impact of the proposed amendments on communities such as ours.

I hope these comments are of some help. Please contact me if you or the Committee members have any questions.

Respectfully,



Walt Wendolowski, AICP
Community Development Director