From: Kristen Kapelanski, Planning Manager
To: Members of the Planning Commission
Date: June 7, 2021
Re: Electronic Plan Review

Over the past year, Planning staff has been working on the City's transition to electronic site plan review, meaning all review comments are placed directly onto submitted site plans via Bluebeam plan review software instead of listed in review letter form. Only a handful of communities in the state have begun to accept and review site plans electronically and Rochester Hills' staff is excited to be on the leading edge of the next concept in plan review.

All City departments involved in the development process now have the ability to accept electronic plans and perform electronic plan reviews. This system allows applicants to apply for a site plan review, building permit, etc. online and submit all plans and documents through the online submission portal, eliminating the need for paper copies to by physically submitted at City Hall. Plans are then routed for review and all reviewers are able to view and comment directly on the plans in real time on their computer. Comments are more easily understood and areas of concern are more easily identified when they can be delineated directly on the plan sheets. This also allows all reviewers to see one another's comments and determine if comments conflict or need additional clarity before plans are sent to the applicant. The applicant is able to easily access their reviewed plans via the online portal, see where they are in the review process and resubmit revised plans.

As we continue this transition, all new projects will be reviewed exclusively through Bluebeam plan review software and there will not be individual staff review letters. The Planning team will still prepare a summary staff report that outlines the project and highlights any outstanding conditions or waivers that are being requested, along with sample motions. In addition, the Planning Commission will be able to see the outstanding staff comments on the electronic plans, but there will no longer be paper copies provided. Projects that began before we accepted plans electronically will continue to be reviewed under the previous review letter format. So over the next few meetings, you'll see a mix of marked up plans and review letters. This has been an adjustment for staff and will be an adjustment for our various reviewing boards and commissions as well but we are excited to take advantage of the efficiencies and clarity electronic plan review can provide. A summary of benefits for Developers, Architects and Contractors is attached.

Electronic Plan Review
Benefits for Developers, Architects and Contractors

- All City departments involved in the development process have the ability to accept electronic plans and perform electronic plan reviews
  - Allows customers to apply for a permit, submit all plans and documents, and pay most fees online
  - The Building Department's inspection process is fully automated, allowing customers to schedule inspections online and automatically sends them an email with the results of their inspection
  - The Department of Public Services conducts electronic plan reviews with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC), Environment, Great Lakes, & Energy (EGLE) and Oakland County Water Resources Commission (WRC)

- Saves time and improves efficiency
  - No longer a need to visit City Hall during the plan review process
  - Quicker access to plan review comments and plans
  - Reviewed plans incorporate plan reviewers' notes, identifying areas of concern directly on the construction drawings
  - Online payment allows fees to be paid quickly, at any time, resulting in less disruption to the construction process for fee collection
  - While we are early in the process, we are seeing time savings of 10% for smaller projects and 15% to 20% for larger projects

- Eliminates paper and saves money
  - No longer necessary to submit multiple copies of plans and other paperwork
  - Reduces the cost of storage of paper documents

- Provides transparency
  - Applicants can see exactly where a project is in the process at any time

- Facilitates faster transfer of documents and solicitation of feedback
  - Electronic process immediately notifies participants in the process when review is required and immediate next steps, if any
  - The system provides access to marked up plans and notes from our plan review team
  - Comments are more easily understood when made directly on the plan sheet
  - It enables City departments to review each other's comments, or even conflicting comments, improving clarity (before plans are sent to the applicant) and preventing the duplication of efforts
  - Modifications to plans can be made and re-submitted electronically

- Enables on-going communication
  - Applicants receive immediate notification of feedback and plan/permit approvals
  - City plan reviewers and third-party consultants can collaborate reviews online at the same time
  - Once the plans have been approved and the permit is ready to issue, the applicant receives an email notifying them that their permit is ready for issuance and the fees that are due
  - After fees are paid, the permit and approved plans are sent to applicants electronically

- Allows 24/7 access
  - Plans and applications can be submitted at any time, at the convenience of the applicant
  - Accommodates real time updating