



On July 15, 2014 the Nantucket Builders Association circulated a survey to nearly 300 local contacts, who represent all aspects of the design-build trade, for their feedback toward improving the local permitting and building processes. The survey was closed on September 22, 2014, and the results are enclosed within.

Summary of findings:

1) Question #1 asked survey respondents how their opinions have changed on the efficiency and effectiveness of PLUS services since the departmental reorganization. Surveys indicated:

- The “PLUS” Counter/Clerical staff received the most favorable opinions, with 65% of those surveyed indicating improved to much improved services
- Onsite Plumbing & Electrical Inspections received the least favorable opinions, with 0% and 5% noting improvements, respectively.
- Also ranking low, was PLUS’ relaying of new code information and explaining new energy requirements.

2) Question #2 asked respondents if the Customer Service trainings have improved the culture and interface with various PLUS departments. Surveys indicated:

- Again, the “PLUS” Counter/Clerical staff received the most favorable opinions, with 56% of those surveyed indicating improved to much improved results.
- The HDC Meetings ranked lowest, with 51% of survey respondents indicating much worse to worse results. Only 14% of those surveyed found the HDC meetings to have improved post customer service trainings.

3) Question 3 asked survey respondents to rate their opinions on various statements on a scale of: STRONGLY DISAGREE <1-2-3-4-5> STRONGLY AGREE.

- **84% of those surveyed agree to strongly agree that:** There should be a consent-type permit process for the building department, similar to the HDC "consent" and "consent with conditions" process, to fast track building permits for non-structural and like-kind replacement projects.
- **54% of those surveyed agree to strongly agree that:** More emphasis on clerical staff specialization would be beneficial to me
- **43% of those surveyed agree to strongly agree that:** Permit fees should be increased in order to offset operational costs of the building department
- **16% of those surveyed agree that:** The Town is committed to bettering the permitting process
- **11% of those surveyed agree that:** PLUS's plans to improve the permitting process are clear to me
- **11% of those surveyed agree to strongly agree that:** Town leadership is interested in the feedback and opinions of the building community:
- **8% of those surveyed agree that:** The Town of Nantucket is concerned about the prosperity of the local building community.
- **8% of those surveyed agree that:** I feel I have been adequately educated on how I can maximize the efficiency of the current permitting system

4) Question 4 asked survey respondents if the HDC's "Consent" and "Consent with Conditions" (for automatic approval) process has expedited the process for sheds, hardscaping, pergolas, and small changes not seen from a public way.

- Overall, this process has proven successful:
 - **48% agree/8% disagree** that this has expedited process for **SHEDS**
 - **48% agree/19% disagree** that this has expedited process for **SMALL CHANGES**
 - **33% agree/14% disagree** that this has expedited process for **HARDSCAPES**
 - **33% agree/14% disagree** that this has expedited process for **PERGOLAS**

5) Question 5 indicated that survey respondents were equally of the opinion that PLUS Clerical staff should remain as structured (35%) or become more specialized with one clerk per department (35%).

6) A sampling of comments and suggestions:

- Building Permits seem to be taking a long time to process. We aren't always notified in a timely manner if they are hung up in health or zoning. If we don't hear anything, we assume things are going smoothly.
- Zoning officer holds up the show as he does not effectively do his job it should not take a month to get a permit or weeks to get an inspection, if the permit office were run as a private entity it would take half the staff and be twice as fast...organization / oversight / accountability
- In general, I appreciate the efforts of the staff at PLUS. I realize they deal with an inordinate volume of paper work.
- PLUS has vastly improved and keep up the good work!
- The paid staff of the HDC should be responsible for the pre-review of applications; not a voting member of the HDC.
- The Building Department is a bundle of internal conflicts and animosities that result in an agonizingly long and hostile process for most applicants.
- The PLUS clerical staff is great, very friendly, personable and helpful. The organization of the HDC is a mess and the board members are continuing to act outside of their jurisdiction.
- The reorganization has not significantly improved the process. We need a "Professional" administrator who knows the building trades who can step in and make decisions as needed
- Continue cultural & service model improvements – it's working. Strive to make on site inspections collaborative in nature. Increase Admin review at Planning Staff level to reduce ZBA filing requirements and lead times.
- Cull the volume at HDC by establishing a visibility determination required for each application. Continue with Consent and Consent with Conditions initiatives that reduce # of apps at HDC hearings.
- Fees could increase substantially and this increase would not be a fraction of 1% of many of the projects that are typically permitted. Keep lesser fees for smaller projects that a local might typically do if that's a concern. Increased fees should go back into the HDC & Building depts that generate them, not the general fund.
- The Town should support it's inspectors as the important and valuable assets they are to the construction industry, the largest year round driver of the island economy. The Town should provide the same interest in the building community that they do in the tourist community

We look forward to discussing our survey results with you at your earliest convenience, and bringing positive feedback to our membership at our next member meeting on October 16, 2014.

Sincerely,
Board of Directors
Nantucket Builders Association

1) Since the departmental reorganization and relocation of PLUS offices, how has your opinion changed on the efficiency and effectiveness of:

SCALE: MUCH WORSE <1-2-3-4-5> MUCH IMPROVED

HDC ADMINISTRATION:

97% response

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	16%	54% worse to much worse
2	38%	
3	32%	32% no change
4	11%	11% improved
5	0%	

BOARD OF HEALTH:

79% response

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	14%	28% worse to much worse
2	14%	
3	43%	43% no change
4	8%	8% improved
5	0%	

ZONING:

95% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	14%	49% worse to much worse
2	35%	
3	32%	32% no change
4	11%	14% improved to much improved
5	3%	

PLUS COUNTER/CLERICAL STAFF:

97% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	5%	16% worse to much worse
2	11%	
3	16%	16% no change
4	30%	65% improved to much improved
5	35%	

PLANNING:

86% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	3%	33% worse to much worse
2	30%	
3	35%	35% no change
4	16%	18% improved to much improved
5	3%	

HDC MEETINGS:

89% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	38%	54% worse to much worse
2	16%	
3	27%	27% no change
4	8%	8% improved to much improved
5	0%	

BUILDING DEPT:

95% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	22%	44% worse to much worse
2	22%	
3	32%	32% no change
4	16%	18% improved to much improved
5	3%	

ONSITE BUILDING INSPECTIONS:

83% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	24%	38% worse to much worse
2	14%	
3	22%	22% no change
4	22%	23% improved to much improved
5	1%	

ONSITE PLUMBING INSPECTIONS:*73% response rate*

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	38%	54% worse to much worse
2	16%	
3	19%	19% no change
4	0%	0% improved
5	0%	

ONSITE ELECTRICAL INSPECTIONS:*75% response rate*

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	32%	51% worse to much worse
2	19%	
3	19%	19% no change
4	5%	5% improved
5	0%	

ONSITE HEALTH INSPECTIONS:*65% response rate*

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	8%	19% worse to much worse
2	11%	
3	35%	35% no change
4	8%	11% improved
5	3%	

RELAYING NEW CODE INFORMATION:*97% response rate*

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	30%	57% worse to much worse
2	27%	
3	27%	27% no change
4	5%	13% improved
5	8%	

EXPLAINING NEW ENERGY CODE REQUIREMENTS*92% response rate*

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	35%	65% worse to much worse
2	30%	
3	19%	19% no change
4	3%	8% improved
5	5%	

- 2) As part of the Departmental Reorganization, the Town and staff of PLUS have undergone Customer Service trainings. Using the scale below, and based on your experience, how do you feel this has improved the culture and interface at:

SCALE: MUCH WORSE <1-2-3-4-5> MUCH IMPROVED**HDC ADMINISTRATION: 94% response**

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	24%	48% worse to much worse
2	24%	
3	19%	19% no change
4	27%	27% improved
5	0%	

BOARD OF HEALTH: 83% response

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	8%	19% worse to much worse
2	11%	
3	59%	59% no change
4	5%	5% improved
5	0%	

ZONING: 89% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	27%	43% worse to much worse
2	16%	
3	27%	27% no change
4	14%	19% improved to much improved
5	5%	

PLUS COUNTER/CLERICAL STAFF:

97% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	14%	25% worse to much worse
2	11%	
3	16%	16% no change
4	24%	56% improved to much improved
5	32%	

PLANNING: 84% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	16%	21% worse to much worse
2	5%	
3	38%	38% no change
4	22%	25% improved to much improved
5	3%	

HDC MEETINGS: 92% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	46%	51% worse to much worse
2	5%	
3	27%	27% no change
4	11%	14% improved to much improved
5	3%	

BUILDING DEPT: 97% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	24%	40% worse to much worse
2	16%	
3	30%	30% no change
4	22%	27% improved to much improved
5	5%	

ONSITE INSPECTIONS: 96% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	30%	38% worse to much worse
2	8%	
3	35%	35% no change
4	11%	23% improved to much improved
5	3%	

3) Please rate your opinion on each of the following statements:

SCALE: STRONGLY DISAGREE <1-2-3-4-5> STRONGLY AGREE

There should be a consent-type permit process for the building department, similar to the HDC "consent" and "consent with conditions" process, to fast track building permits for non-structural and like-kind replacement projects.

95% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	5%	8% disagree to strongly disagree
2	3%	
3	3%	3% no change
4	8%	84% agree
5	76%	

The Town of Nantucket is concerned about the prosperity of the local building community:

94% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	46%	70% disagree to strongly disagree
2	24%	
3	16%	16% no change
4	8%	8% agree
5	0%	

PLUS's plans to improve the permitting process are clear to me:

95% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	43%	70% disagree to strongly disagree
2	27%	
3	14%	14% no change
4	11%	11% agree
5	0%	

The Town is committed to bettering the permitting process:

95% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	38%	60% disagree to strongly disagree
2	22%	
3	19%	19% no change
4	16%	16% agree
5	0%	

Town leadership is interested in the feedback and opinions of the building community:

94% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	43%	67% disagree to strongly disagree
2	24%	
3	16%	16% no change
4	8%	11% agree to strongly agree
5	3%	

More emphasis on clerical staff specialization would be beneficial to me:

92% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	11%	22% disagree to strongly disagree
2	11%	
3	16%	16% no change
4	32%	54% agree to strongly agree
5	22%	

Permit fees should be increased in order to offset operational costs of the building department:

94% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	16%	27% disagree to strongly disagree
2	11%	
3	24%	24% no change
4	19%	43% agree to strongly agree
5	24%	

I feel I have been adequately educated on how I can maximize the efficiency of the current permitting system

94% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	38%	62% disagree to strongly disagree
2	24%	
3	24%	24% no change
4	5%	8% agree to strongly agree
5	3%	

- 4) The HDC has implemented a more detailed agenda as a means of expediting smaller projects via "Consent" and "Consent with Conditions" (for automatic approval) sections. Do you feel this has expedited the process for:

SCALE: STRONGLY DISAGREE <1-2-3-4-5> STRONGLY AGREE

SHEDS?: 91% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	8%	8% disagree to strongly disagree
2	0%	
3	35%	35% no change
4	24%	48% agree to strongly agree
5	24%	

HARDSCAPES? 93% response rate

SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	14%	19% disagree to strongly disagree
2	5%	
3	41%	41% no change
4	11%	33% agree to strongly agree
5	22%	

PERGOLAS?			SMALL CHANGES OR THOSE NOT SEEN FROM A PUBLIC WAY?		
<i>88% response rate</i>			<i>93% response rate</i>		
SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation	SCORE	% TOTAL	Interpretation
1	14%	14% strongly disagree	1	11%	19% disagree to strongly disagree
2	0%		2	8%	
3	41%	41% no change	3	27%	27% no change
4	14%	33% agree to strongly agree	4	24%	48% agree to strongly agree
5	19%		5	24%	

5) Would you like to see the Building Department clerical staff:

97% response rate

Maintain current operations. All staff assist in all departments	35%
Restructure; 1 clerk per department ie Health, HDC, Building, Zoning etc	35%
Grow in number of staff member- maintain current operations. All staff assist in all departments	16%
Decrease the number of Staff; maintain current operations. (i.e. All staff assist in all departments)	3%
Other?	8%

6) Please write any comments regarding your recent experience with PLUS and the permitting process, and any ideas for the Town or NBA to better operations and communications for the building community.

- Building Permits seem to be taking a long time to process. We aren't always notified in a timely manner if they are hung up in health or zoning. If we don't hear anything, we assume things are going smoothly.
- Zoning officer holds up the show as he does not effectively do his job it should not take a month to get a permit or weeks to get a inspection, if the permit office where run as a private entity it would take half the staff and be twice as fast...organization / oversight / accountability
- In general, I appreciate the efforts of the staff at PLUS. I realize they deal with an inordinate volume of paper work.
- PLUS has vastly improved and keep up the good work!
- I can say with assurance that the current HDC and building department review process is serving no one well; not the applicants, not builders, not the town. Linda Williams has appropriated the HDC as her own fiefdom and, because she seems willing to give hours of her time to the micromanagement of the HDC, has Leslie and Andrew's tacit approval. The paid staff of the HDC should be responsible for the pre-review of applications; not a voting member of the HDC.
- The Building Department is a bundle of internal conflicts and animosities that result in an agonizingly long and hostile process for most applicants.
- The PLUS clerical staff is great, very friendly, personable and helpful. The organization of the HDC is a mess and the board members are continuing to act outside of their jurisdiction.
- The HDC has made improvements to their "consent" approvals. The Building Inspector is very helpful and is friendly to work with. The Zoning officer is still largely unfriendly and uninterested in helping. His review of applications has also been lacking in accuracy. The Health Inspector is also relatively unfriendly but is more

amenable to offer assistance/help. The Planning staff is always friendly and helpful, although I sometimes feel they are not always fully aware of the ever-changing zoning regulations/amendments

- The reorganization has not significantly improved the process. Leslie seems more accessible, but is not very knowledgeable about anything but zoning. Andrew's door is always closed, and he "talks a good talk" but doesn't "walk a good walk. We need a "Professional" administrator who knows the building trades who can step in and make decisions as needed. We do not need more glorified clerks whose expertise is planning. This is a problem at the TOP levels of Town administration, but it is convenient for them, while no one is aware of, or paying any attention to our needs.
- Continue cultural & service model improvements – it's working. Strive to make on site inspections collaborative in nature. Increase Admin review at Planning Staff level to reduce ZBA filing requirements and lead times.
- Cull the volume at HDC by establishing a visibility determination required for each application. Continue with Consent and Consent with Conditions initiatives that reduce # of apps at HDC hearings.
- Get an HDC Administrator who is empowered and can do the job, which is to advise, review, and help process applications to increase service and decrease wait time. See Planning & ZBA Administrator models for example. Clarify HDC Administrator job description and enforce it - this is a Paid Town position. HDC Chair (a volunteer) is organizing and posting agendas, reviewing applications for completeness, reviewing for consent agenda, reviewing and creating consent with conditions terms, etc - all the work of the Administrator (a highly compensated Town employee.)
- There is more staff horsepower than ever before and still the Administrator struggles to do the job. Increase HDC & permit fees to bolster, find, train, and service the customers and professionals who use the system. Fees could increase substantially and this increase would not be a fraction of 1% of many of the projects that are typically permitted. Keep lesser fees for smaller projects that a local might typically do if that's a concern. Increased fees should go back into the HDC & Building depts that generate them, not the general fund. The business of reviewing and issuing permits is sustainable if the fees are raised. This could apply to inspections as well - fees for inspections - as a means of supplementing the salaries of inspectors. It has to be a well paid position for someone to leave the trades to do it. Otherwise it's a pay cut which will make it unattractive or impossible to some of the best local candidates.
- Trades inspectors should be able to practice their trades on nights and weekends, and would not be able to inspect their own work. The Town should support it inspectors as the important and valuable assets they are to the construction industry, the largest year round driver of the island economy. The Town should provide the same interest in the building community that they do in the tourist community.