



STAFF REPORT

Date: August 17, 2022
To: TRPA Governing Board
From: TRPA Staff
Subject: Innovation Initiative Update

Summary:

The Governing Board will receive an update on the Innovation Initiative consisting of two parts. The first is a presentation of the Permitting Improvements Action Plan prepared by Arlo Stockham, consultant to TRPA, and the second will cover recent technology enhancements and future technology improvements that are paired with the action plan. The second part will be presented by Ken Kasman, Research and Analysis Department Manager. Because the Action Plan includes recommendations for future Code amendments, the Governing Board will be asked to endorse the Action Plan.

Required Motions:

To endorse the Permitting Improvements Action Plan, the Board must make the following motion, based on the staff report:

- 1) A motion to endorse the Permitting Improvements Action Plan as shown in Attachment A.

For the motion to pass, an affirmative vote of any eight Board members is required.

Project Description/Background:

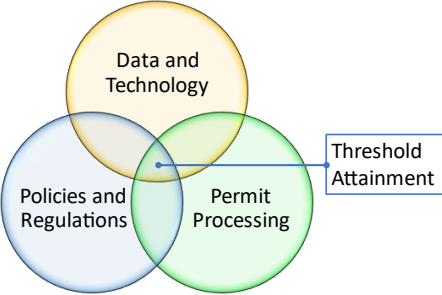
To assist all Board members to become more familiar with the agency strategic initiatives before the next strategic planning retreat in early 2023, at each monthly meeting over the six-month period since the Board retreat one of the six agency strategic initiatives is being presented. In July the *Tahoe Living: Housing and Community Revitalization Strategic Initiative* was presented and accompanied by a workshop for Board input on priorities for the next phase of that initiative. This month the *Digital First: Innovation Strategic Initiative* will be featured. All the strategic initiatives are outlined in the 2022-2023 Annual Work Plan included in the agenda packet for this meeting.

The *Digital First: Innovation Strategic Initiative* involves significantly improving the ability of the agency to provide services in a “digital first” way by rethinking processes, updating policies and code, and using new technology to maintain and attain the agency’s compact-mandated threshold standards. This is achieved when all three of these are aligned and work together.

- Development and review of policies and regulations requires accurate information on the previous and expected effectiveness and impact of those policies; to be able to measure and adjust policies and regulations, those policies and regulations must clearly identify expected outcomes and include a mechanism for their ongoing measurement.

- Policies and regulations must be clear to be useful for creating effective permitting processes; permitting processes must accurately reflect the intent of adopted policies and regulations.
- Effective and efficient processes rely on accurate information and technology to make it accessible; technology and information can only be used effectively when processes are clear and consistent.

TRPA has been working to achieve this synergy between policies and regulations, data and technology, and permit processing (e.g., updating the threshold standard, policies, code, and mitigation fees for vehicle miles travelled per capita) and will continue to do so as part of the adaptive management approach. That is the foundational concept underlying the Innovation Initiative.



Action Plan for Permitting Improvement:

TRPA started a permitting system improvement project in early 2022 to evaluate and improve TRPA’s processes and ordinances. These improvements will be paired with significant investments in the Accela permitting software and other technologies to streamline and improve TRPA’s application processing, reduce review times, and operate more efficiently and effectively.

TRPA selected Stockham Consulting to assist with this project. Arlo Stockham has extensive planning and community development experience in the Reno/Tahoe area, including prior employment with TRPA as manager for the 2012 Regional Plan Update. He is currently reviewing project applications for TRPA under a separate contract, so he brings that additional perspective to this project. Finally, his contract is unique in that it includes working with staff to implement some of the first phase recommendations in the Action Plan. Tiffany Good, Permitting Program Manager, will be the TRPA staff lead for these implementation efforts.

Over the past several months, Stockham Consulting worked collaboratively with staff and stakeholders to prepare the attached Action Plan for TRPA Permitting Improvements (Attachment A). The Action Plan outlines a strategy and work program to improve the TRPA permitting system. Recommended changes include process improvements and code amendments focused on the following priority topics:

- Establish more efficient, consistent, and predictable application review processes.
- Simplify and shorten review processes for minor applications and sequential approvals.
- Update code standards that are difficult to interpret, do not add value, or are unduly cumbersome.
- Prioritize public communication and customer services.
- Expand tools for staff development and training.
- Maintain adequate and dependable funding to support quality application reviews.

The Action Plan proposes 12 coordinated improvement projects to be completed in phases over the next 18 months, along with three longer-term recommendations. In combination, the projects will develop tools needed for more efficient and consistent application review practices.

Mr. Stockham will attend the Governing Board meeting, present the Action Plan, and answer questions. Staff requests Governing Board discussion and feedback, as well as endorsement of the Action Plan as it calls for initiating some work that will ultimately be brought back to the Governing Board for future consideration (e.g., Code of Ordinances amendments).

Recent and Future Technology Enhancements:

The Research and Analysis Department has been enhancing the data and technology available for permit processing since the department was created following the 2012 Regional Plan Update. These enhancements include:

- Geographic Information System (GIS) – These data and this technology are used for managing and analyzing spatial data. TRPA uses ESRI GIS software to produce all digital and hardcopy maps, and for various analyses ranging from natural resource to development activities.
- Lake Tahoe Information (LT Info) – This is a portal to online information related to multiple TRPA and partner activities (www.laketahoeinfo.org). It was developed through a public-private partnership from which TRPA continues to receive royalties and upgrades to the system. The user can access information on EIP projects, clarity, monitoring, sustainability, thresholds, transportation, and land parcels (Parcel Tracker). The Permitting Program and applicants regularly utilize the LT Info Parcel Tracker.
- Permitting (Accela) – TRPA uses the Accela permit processing software to track applications from submittal, through completeness review, through application review, and through construction inspections. The agency has been using a 15-year-old version of the software until this year. This summer, TRPA upgraded to the current version of the software and will be designing and configuring further enhancements to support the improved processes recommended in the Permitting Improvements Action Plan described above.
- Document Preservation (Scanning) – Critical information on existing property characteristics, development rights, permits, etc. for projects reviewed by TRPA since it came into existence is stored in hardcopy files. TRPA has requested funding to convert this information into digital files and ultimately link that information to the LT Info Parcel Tracker, so it is available online for applicants, staff, and the public.

Ken Kasman, Research and Analysis Department Manager, will present highlights from these efforts and plans for future data and technology enhancements.

Contact Information:

For questions regarding this agenda item, please contact Ken Kasman, Research and Analysis Division Manager, at (775) 589-5253 or kkasman@trpa.gov, or Tiffany Good, Permitting Program Manager, at (775) 589-5283 or tgood@trpa.gov.

Attachment:

- A. Permitting Improvements Action Plan

Attachment A

Permitting Improvements Action Plan