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CITY HALL · ONE FRANK H. OGAWA PLAZA · OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612

JANE BRUNNER
Councilmember
District 1

(510) 238-7001
FAX (510) 238-6910
TTD (510) 238-7413

To: Members of the CED Committee
From: Chair Brummer
Date: September 27, 2011
Re: Item 7: Requiring Consistency Among City Building Inspectors

On July 12th, 2011, I requested “An Informational Report And/ Or Action On Recommendations To Require Consistency Among Building Inspectors In Order To Prevent Conflicting Directions To Business And/Or Property Owners”. While the report highlights many positive changes in the Building Services Division, it does not specifically address the problem that I had asked staff to resolve.

In the last few months, I have been meeting with a number of business owners in Oakland to learn about their issues and to see how the City can help businesses to thrive in Oakland. One issue that has come up again and again is inconsistency among City building inspectors. Many businesses are frustrated that one inspector may say one thing and then another inspector will visit the property and require an additional and sometimes even conflicting change. One business reported that three different building inspectors visited their new restaurant during the course of its renovation and the business was asked to move the location of the men’s room sink three different times.

This is unacceptable and places an undue burden on businesses that are already facing numerous obstacles due to the economy. The City should be helping business and property owners to navigate our code requirements, not making them harder to follow. Business and property owners need to have some certainty that when they are given direction by a City building inspector, that that direction stands regardless of whether or not a different inspector does a subsequent inspection.

To address this issue, I propose that either a single inspector be assigned to each project or if more than one inspector inspects a project, a later inspector cannot overturn the original inspector’s decision.

I urge the CED Committee to support this proposal and direct staff to come back with a report detailing the implementation of this proposal.

Item 7
CED Committee
September 27, 2011