



TOWN of RYE BUILDING DEPARTMENT

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2024 Budget Review

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To Select Board Members,

Thank you for your support of the building department. This budget review will highlight some of the department's accomplishments and changes in 2023 and needs for 2024.

Expansion of Space and Hours

Prior to the expansion into the front office, the building department was limited in space which limited our availability to efficiently serve the public. We were literally on top of each other. Appointments had to be made to control the overlap of everyday operations, public viewing of files, permit submittal, consultations with the building inspectors, and general everyday foot traffic.

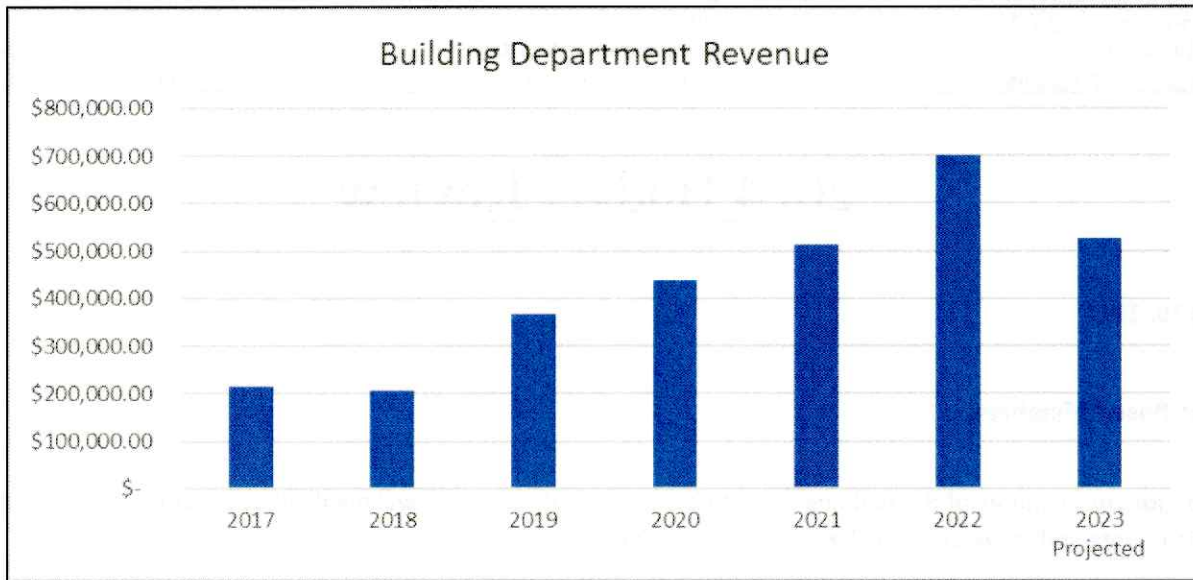
Expanding into the front office has helped significantly, and we appreciate the select board for recognizing our need for additional space and providing it. We have been able to expand our availability for the public to view files. When we were in the rear office, appointments for viewing files were 10:00 am – 12:00 pm in half hour increments. We now can schedule appointments to view files twice a day instead of only in the morning. We now schedule from 10:00 am-12:00 pm and then again from 1:00 pm-3:00 pm in half-hour increments. In addition, we are more flexible to help accommodate those who cannot work within those timelines. We now have the availability for consultations in the rear office, a private area that is well suited for these discussions and for plan reviews. The added space gives us the availability to lay out building plans, site plans and septic plans for review, consultation, and research.

We have also expanded our office hours. The office is open to the public at 7:00 am instead of 8:00 am. This helps contractors who are seeking information or answers on permitting. For example, a plumber or electrician can now bring in an application the same morning that they are headed to the job site.

Revenue History

The following revenue history shows the increased revenue the department has brought in over the years as the number of building projects, and the construction value of the projects, have increased. The increased permit fee revenue, over the years, is a result of more complex projects and applications. In the past few years, the need for detailed reviews of projects has increased dramatically and is a primary reason why we are requesting additional support in the building department by hiring a part-time inspector.

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- In 2017 this office brought in \$214,847.93 in permit fees.
- In 2017 the department hired a second Building Inspector. My start date was 09/11/2017.
- In 2018 the department brought in \$205,816.62.
- In 2019 this office brought in \$366,205.65 in permit fees. This was the year that we added a \$50/application fee to all applications. This fee is not refunded if the permit fee is refunded.
- In 2020 this office brought in \$436,032.44
- In 2021 the department hired a full time Deputy Building Inspector to fill the Peter Rowells vacated position. Vince Bauers start date was 10/05/2021.
- In 2021 this office brought in \$512,310.45 in permit fees. An increase of \$146,104.80 from 2019. This increase was over two years.
- In 2022 this office brought in \$699,202.45 in permit fees. An increase of \$186,892 from 2021. This increase was over just one year.
- In the 3-years from 2019 to 2022 construction values have doubled. Construction value in 2019 was \$31,843,387.85. Construction value in 2022 was \$63,687,627.00.
- In the 3-years from 2019 to 2022 permit fee revenue has doubled. Permit fee revenue in 2019 was \$366,205.65. Permit fee revenue in 2022 was \$699,202.45.
- As of 10/18/2023, the Building Department is on track to generate approximately \$525,144 in 2023.

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Additional Work Requirements / Additional Resources Needed

There are several additional demands being placed on the building department. To continue maintaining a high level of customer service, an additional part-time employee is being requested. A primary reason for this is that new demands are being placed on the department which take considerable time to manage.

With limited vacant lots available for new construction, many properties are pushing the boundaries with regards to what is being proposed. This often requires additional time and resources for our reviews, including legal review and applications that go before the ZBA. Additionally, with so many properties in coastal areas, the demands from FEMA continue to increase. The details of FEMA requirements are more demanding for the confirmation of compliance with their regulations. The review and research process has become much more involved. Decisions must be right and backed up with documentation from FEMA Technical Bulletins and regulation resources. We have been dealing with an audit with the FEMA state representative. We have also been dealing with FEMA potential compliance issues with properties under construction. This request is based on any public concern noted about a project. That concern is then brought to the state representative's attention. At that time a FEMA compliance review is requested by the town's floodplain manager (the building inspector.) This department received such a request recently on four properties under construction with a requested one-week timeline to respond. This request obviously pushed other demanding issues behind.

The review process encompasses freshwater and tidal wetlands and wetland buffers and may require the review of areas of shoreland protection, septic system history and compliance, special permitting from state and local departments, any conditions of approval placed on the project by the planning or zoning boards, review of history files and documentation for any restrictions placed on the property, flood ordinance and FEMA compliance, architectural and engineered drawings for building code and life safety compliance, site plan and stormwater management as compared to the requirements detailed in the town ordinances and the Rye general code.

Closing Thoughts

The building department has been extremely busy and productive in 2023 and will continue to be so in 2024. Our position in the past several years has been reactive instead of proactive, as we have had many competing demands placed on our time and focus. We have been continuously putting out fires and would like more time to focus on other tasks to help support the department. Our goal has been to become more proactive. Recent policy changes have laid the groundwork for this. We have been focused on organizing the department's processes and information access. We have also been focused on becoming more efficient in our tasks. The expansion into the front office has made both of these goals more realistic. My role has lately become a role of research, review and putting out fires. Supporting decisions and researching challenges on decisions. Along with the everyday operations as previously detailed.

The Deputy Building Inspectors role is that of mostly inspections. Although we are continuously working to expand his role into other areas of daily operations. Time is a challenge to fulfill all of our objectives. Time is a challenge for the level of continuing education and obtaining ICC certifications. There is a recurring need to "rush through" the permit approval process. This is concerning on many levels, but it is a reality of the workload and complexity of permitting in an area with many regulations and monitoring. We are also planning to update all of our permits to include detailed lists of requirements for permitting in specific areas of concern.

Having an additional part-time inspector will help the department by assisting with performing responsible inspections, issuance of permits, and administrative work regarding properties and buildings to ensure compliance with local, state, and federal codes relative to construction, land and building use, excavation, and land development in the town. This

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will allow the department to continue providing a high level of customer service while also meeting the many other demands and increased requests being made by residents, builders, and FEMA.

Thank you again for your support of the department. We are here to serve and support the town and appreciate your consideration of our requests.

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