

**By Frank Boyles, City Manager**

On June 8, approximately 30 persons including City Council, city staff, local builders and developers sat down for a half day for a two-way discussion about development related issues. Six of the most active developers in Prior Lake were represented and three builders participated.

The list of seven discussion topics included preliminary and final plats, comprehensive plan amendments, variances, certificates of occupancy, the issuance of building permits and building inspections. To that original list, the group added final plats, concept plans and the Development Review Committee, lots of record and daily communication.

Building permit issuance received the greatest discussion. The group noted that the city's permit issuance time is on par with other municipalities. They asked that the city consider creating classes of permits based upon their complexity and therefore permit issuance time. For each permit group, an issuance standard would be developed. So, for example, a new house permit (nonraparian) might have a 10-day issuance period while a deck permit could have a four-hour issuance standard. Staff would then monitor our experience at achieving the standards.

Another suggestion was to provide applicants with copies of the checklists the city uses when reviewing permits as well as a template showing all of the detail a survey should contain. The content and detail of engineering drawings was also discussed.

All in all, developers and builders gave the city passing marks in virtually all categories. In fact, they said that in some areas, the city excels. As council members present stated, the city desires to move to the next level. The establishment and monitoring of standards will help to do just that.

The forum concluded with the commitment by staff to examine all forum recommendations and report in 45 to 60 days to the builders and developers about what has been done to implement and communicate the changes.

It was agreed that this forum would be repeated in six months to gauge progress and identify new issues. Because of the success of this forum, there is support to conduct additional forums with other customer groups to proceed with our important continuous improvement efforts.

Credit the City Council for its support of the 2030 Vision and Strategic Plan and commitment to better communication and customer service, and the council's Communications Advisory Committee for coming up with the idea of the forum and putting forth the energy to make it happen. On behalf of the staff, we are committed to identify and implement customer service enhancements which add value to the goods and services we deliver.