Department consistency policy

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http://charmeck.org/mecklenburg/county/LUESA/CodeEnforcement/Links/Documents/ConsistencyPolicy.pdf

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DEPARTMENTAL "APPROVED PLAN" CONSISTENCY POLICY
(PLAN REVIEW-FIELD ENFORCEMENT)
Revised 10/08/2013, *with commentary 4/6/2016*

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Commentary: this policy applies primarily to commercial projects. Application to residential projects is at the discretion of the Directors and involved Project Manager/Code Enforcement manager

<u>**GENERAL**</u>: Code enforcement is accomplished through the combined efforts of the plan examiners and field inspectors. Each plays an important role in assuring that structures are built in compliance with the State and local laws. It is very important that code enforcement is administered in a fair, thorough, and consistent manner by all. The purpose of this policy is to improve the Department's ability to accomplish the above and "SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE," by outlining the steps used to address "Gray Areas" and/or "Interpretation Issues" as they are encountered. "Gray Areas" are code questions that are encountered by experienced code officials. "Interpretation Issues" include various types of code enforcement problems caused by missing or non-compliant information on the approved drawings, or by inconsistent code interpretations between office and field code officials. Mecklenburg County Code Administrators (CA'a) are ultimately responsible for interpreting the North Carolina State Building Codes. Questions and issues should go to the CA's only after a reasonable effort is invested by the code officials, as indicated below.

<u>**PRE-PLAN APPROVAL**</u>: Since Plan Examiners are at the front of the code enforcement process, the following steps shall be taken to reduce the number of occurrences where a disagreement in interpretation might arise between plan examiners and field inspectors.

- Plan Examiner identifies "Gray Area" interpretation issue on the design drawings.
- Plan Examiner discusses issue with plan review peers and/or supervisor.
- Plan Examiner sends an e-mail message with the subject line **"Interpretation Issue"** to the CA, with a copy to the assigned Inspector. The message shall include the following minimum information:
  1. Project Name
  2. Project Number
  3. Project Address
  4. Project Description
  5. Code Section
  6. Gray Area/Interpretation Issue described in detail.
- Inspector will contact Plan Examiner ASAP (via email or other electronic means) if he or she wants to participate in the discussion.
- CA meets with Plan Examiner and provides Plan Examiner with a written answer/interpretation to the Gray Area/Interpretation issue.
- Plan Examiner adds CA's written answer to the project file (Note added to plans or PDF sent to file) for future reference.
- Permit is issued with notes referencing CA's documented interpretation.
- CA's written interpretation is shared with ALL code officials at next consistency team meeting.

POST-PLAN APPROVAL: When the field inspector identifies a field issue and questions the code compliance of the "approved drawings" or feels the "approved drawings" are missing critical information necessary to clearly demonstrate code compliance, the following steps shall be taken:

Minor Issues
Commentary: the current RTAP category 1 is considered the same as "minor issues".
Issues identified by the field inspector (such as an improper door swing, dimension errors, 1 or 2 missing dampers, missing exit sign, etc), requiring minor corrections to the approved project design and not requiring a formal "Revision to Approved Plan" (RTAP) submittal, shall be addressed by taking the following steps:
- Inspector sends e-mails to the inspections team Project Manager (PM)/Inspector Supervisor (IS) describing the issue, and as needed, discusses the issue. Upon validation of concern with inspection team management, e-mail is forwarded on to office team PM, as an FYI.
- Inspector brings issue to the attention of the owner's team and informs them of the need to obtain remedial direction from the Project Designer.
- If the designer's solution is relatively simple, it can be approved by the field inspector. The inspector adds inspection notes to the project file with a description of the corrective action to be taken.
- If the solution requires a documented change to the designer's sealed project design, the change can be in the form of a sealed bulletin drawing and shall be uploaded to the project records by the contractor on the Posse website.
- Once changes/corrections are executed by the contractor, inspector inspects for conformance to the new design.
- If there seems to be a trend of a particular code item, it should be brought up with in the consistency team meeting discussion.

Major Issues
Commentary: the current RTAP category 2 is considered the same as "major issues".
Commentary: the following does not apply to the HCD Team, when working collaboratively with the owner's team on BIM-IPD projects.
- *Mega Multifamily Team major issues will be resolved through quick turnaround meetings with the CA's and involved plan review PM (who has the discretion to include the plan reviewer). The CA has the option of including the Directors. The execution/notification strategy will be as agreed to by all in the meeting.*
Issues identified that appear to the inspector to represent larger or more complicated issues that are likely to require re-submittal of plans (RTAP), involve controversy and/or impact other areas of the "Approved Design Drawings" shall be handled as follows:
- Inspector approves any areas of work found to be compliant and informs the owner's team of the need to get office clarification regarding a question on the remaining portion.
- Inspector contacts the inspections team PM/IS and discusses the issue.
- Inspector sends an e-mail message with the subject line **"Interpretation Issue"** to the plan review PM and Plan Examiner and a copy to the inspection team PM/IS. The message shall include the following minimum information:
  1. Project Name/Number
  2. Permit Number
  3. Project Address
  4. Project Description
  5. Code Section
  6. Interpretation Issue (Gray Area) described in detail.
- Plan Examiner calls or emails the Inspector to meet and/or discuss.
  - If no agreement, the plan review PM and the inspection PM are added to the discussion.
  - If no agreement, the CA is added to the discussion.
  - If no agreement, Director of Code Enforcement participates as final step, again with all parties.
- If the final decision changes the original interpretation and/or results in a need to revise the "approved design drawings," the Plan Examiner shall deliver the written message to the owner's project designer (including a copy of any documented CA's interpretation), outlining the required change. A copy shall be sent to the project file, the plan review PM, the inspection PM, and the Inspector.
- If no plan change is required, the inspector will notify the customer of the final decision.