ELECTRONIC SUBMITTAL TRAINING

Customer – Self Scheduling in EPM
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The Electronic Plan Management System (EPM) is an online work flow tool that allows project managers, architects, engineers, and designers the ability to oversee their projects as they go through the plan review and permitting process. All pertinent information related to the project is visible on a web-based “dashboard” – with real time updates. Users can watch and manage their project as it progresses from estimation, scheduling, gating, plan review and on to approvals and permitting.

The Mecklenburg County, NC EPM site can be found at: [http://epm.mecklenburgcountync.gov/](http://epm.mecklenburgcountync.gov/)

OnSchedule Plan Review is this jurisdiction’s plan review option when a commercial project is too large or complex for a CTAC Review. In this process, a project will electronically apply, schedule, submit documents, hold all reviews, and be issued its approval package and permit(s) through the EPM portal or “dashboard”. This system efficiently puts the project manager in charge of their schedule and their project’s progress. Mecklenburg County designed OnSchedule Plan Review in a response to stakeholder desire to be able to reserve and control their review time. A project manager, when making application, provides us with a projected PLANS READY date = when they can commit to all documents being final, formatted to meet minimal submittal requirements and ready for review for code compliance. With proper lead time planning, a reserved review team is scheduled, ready and waiting on your project instead of it waiting on Mecklenburg County Code Enforcement.
Once scheduled by the Coordinator, the project’s status will change to REVIEW SCHEDULE TENTATIVE – the project manager will be notified via email that the schedule details are ready for them to review and accept. If the tentative schedule is not acceptable the project manager can REJECTION the schedule and enter a new PLANS READY ON date from which the Coordinator will work to rebuild a tentative schedule, or they can attempt to self schedule the review. This training module is designed to instruct on this option...

NOTES:

Once a project application has been processed (completed ESTIMATION and a Project Coordinator has been assigned), it enters a status of REVIEW NOT SCHEDULED.

Once scheduled by the Coordinator, the project’s status will change to REVIEW SCHEDULE TENTATIVE – the project manager will be notified via email that the schedule details are ready for them to review and accept. If the tentative schedule is not acceptable the project manager can REJECT the schedule and enter a new PLANS READY ON date from which the Coordinator will work to rebuild a tentative schedule, or they can attempt to self schedule the review. This training module is designed to instruct on this option ...

LESSON #1:
YOU CAN. YOU PROBABLY SHOULDN’T. WE WILL SHOW YOU HOW ANYWAY.
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- About the ONLY benefit to scheduling your own project is that you are not limited by business hours or your Coordinator’s availability to reschedule your review time to get that time blocked off and reserved.

- If you are contemplating scheduling your review independent of your Project Coordinator, there are a few things you need to keep in mind:

1. Coordinators work within the parameters set by your “Plans Ready” date and the results of the Estimation process:
   - Assigns trades or agencies required, specific to your project
   - Estimates how much time each trade/agency will need to be reserved for the review

2. You will need to be sure you have made note of the internal note entries and the estimated hours/trades made once ALL ESTIMATIONS COMPLETED:
3. You need to be aware of the goals of the review team:
   • Must assign to the same review team that attended the Preliminary Review, if there was one.
   • Must assign to the same review team that was a part of other phases of this same project – shell, other upfits, parent-child project, etc.
   • Must assign to the same review team from any previous cycles of this same project.
   • Some reviewers are restricted as to the scope of project they review.
   • Some reviewers have limited or restricted hours they can be scheduled. We are fortunate to have several retired Code Enforcement Officials contracted to review projects for us – those individuals often are limited to only being available certain days/hours, etc. EPM will not limit you from selecting any reviewer for any time/day but staff maintain a working knowledge of those particulars.

4. You need to be aware of the goals of the coordinator when they schedule:
   • They are charged with getting a project’s review start date as close as possible to your declared “Plans Ready” date and in getting ALL trades/agencies scheduled within 5 business days of that, if not better. The goal there is to not prolong the overall review schedule start/end timeline to more than 5 business days.
   • They understand that plan review staff are only “hard” scheduled between 8-2 each business day. The remaining work day time is spent on returning phone calls, emails, flexing for project placed into Interactive Review and working in unscheduled RTAPs and Subsequent Cycle projects ... and taking a lunch break. EPM does not limit the scheduling during any time of the day.
   • They understand when it is possible to break that 6-hour rule and “hard” schedule a plans examiner for a full 8-hour day, or when they can be double-booked, etc.
   • They understand when a project isn’t required to be scheduled at all and how to set it up to be “pooled”.

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If you do decide to go ahead and self schedule, we ask that you make sure to let your coordinator know right away so that they can check behind you and make sure the schedule is compliant.

If you do not let your coordinator know that you have self scheduled, this can be the complication: Once scheduled, this project will fall off of staff work plates as an “action item” – it is now just waiting for your submission. If you have missed some “internal notes”, scheduled the wrong staff/wrong times, etc. your project may lose valuable time/opportunities to correct those without impacting your desired schedule if it is not addressed right away.

Keep in mind that the tentative schedule presented to you is the best possible schedule with those parameters you have provided. It is unlikely you will be able to get an earlier schedule than what was presented. Self scheduling behind what your coordinator has already presented only really makes sense if you have decided you need MORE time to get the plans ready then what was originally proposed on your project application, rarely is it an opportunity to get an earlier schedule.

Here are screen-shots to walk you through this process:
Once scheduled, the designated project manager will receive a system generated email. Additionally, the project will be in the applicant’s OPEN ACTIONS TAB. It is important to note that this schedule is only TENTATIVE, until the project manager has accepted it.

From the OPEN ACTIONS TAB, find and select the project.

At the HISTORY page of the project, you will find the Tentative Review Schedule Note by clicking on the SCHEDULE PDF link (most likely the last entry).

NOTE: do not simply hover over the associated blue arrow, as that will only show the tentative review start date. Project managers must review the complete Review Schedule Note (SCHEDULE PDF) so they can see all of the details they are committing to (minimal submittal requirements, estimated upfront fees, deadlines, etc.)...
Considering the Tentative Review Schedule...

Before considering whether or not this tentative schedule works for your design team, the project manager should thoroughly review all of the details provided in the review SCHEDULE DETAILS note:

1. Review schedule (begin and end date).
2. Upfront fee estimate must be secured (either paid or through a letter of authorization) no later than 2 business days prior to the beginning of the review.
3. SUBMITTAL DEADLINES: EPM will set the gate due dates to be 2 business days prior to the start of the review (takes into account weekends and County holidays). This section will also state the cancellation fee-free deadline as well as the cancellation fee should a project schedule be changed/missed after that deadline.
4. Project coordinator contact information. This staff person has been assigned to this project to help facilitate your plan review from the time you make application to permit issuance. This is your “go-to-person”.
5. Minimal submittal criteria (specific to the project’s current process phase). Sometimes this note is not visible without scrolling down to the bottom of this document but be sure to review prior to making a commitment to the schedule and deadlines!
Before committing to a review schedule, it is important that you understand the minimal submittal requirements for formatting and packaging an electronic submittal plan review project with Mecklenburg County Code Enforcement. The basics are listed on the SCHEDULE DETAILS note but we have developed a page on our website to help as well. These requirements are designed to guide applicants toward a successful and timely plan review.

Be sure you have reviewed these requirements for your particular stage or process:

**CUSTOMER GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL GATING**

1. Start with the **PROJECT FORMATTING & SUBMITTAL PACKAGING REQUIREMENTS** — comprehensive criteria to optimize the construction documents and supporting information using the parameters of our electronic plan management system for all processes.

2. For more specifics to your particular stage of a process (First Cycle, Second or Subsequent Review Cycle, Interactive, RTAP, etc.), select the relevant **QUICK START GUIDES** or **GATE PROTOCOLS**.

A project manager’s failure to carefully check project files for formatting and alignment will cause a return from the gate without review, leading to delays and potential cancellation of your reserved review date(s). So, be sure you understand what you are committing to.
Changing a Tentative Review Schedule...

If the tentative schedule is acceptable – go ahead and **ACCEPT**. (See the training module on “Confirming the Review Schedule” for specific on accepting a tentative schedule.) At this point the schedule is set and the project status will remain in **WAITING FOR PACKAGE SUBMISSION** until the project files are uploaded and submitted (or until the submittal deadline is missed and the schedule is aborted.)

However, if the project manager determines that the tentative schedule and its deadlines does not work for their team, then they will need to **REJECT** the schedule and enter a new **PLANS READY ON** date, if known. To do this, under **TOOLBOX**, click on **ACCEPT/REJECT REVIEW DATE** and then the **DECLINE REVIEW START DATE** button.

Hit **SUBMIT**: And then wait for your coordinator to develop a new tentative schedule. That new schedule will then go on the project dashboard and the process will continue until there is an acceptable schedule and the project manager has finalized it (**ACCEPTED** it)...

**... OR YOU CAN CHOOSE TO SELF SCHEDULE.**
You are not able to meet the deadlines as outlined in the tentative schedule provided by your coordinator and you want to try to self-schedule.... After you have rejected the proposed tentative schedule by selecting the DECLINE button (you can select either a new plans ready date or not known) and then SUBMIT. The project will then return to the dashboard with a REVIEW NOT SCHEDULED status:

When you are ready to set a new PLANS READY ON date, begin SELF SCHEDULING.

Be sure you have made note of any internal notes provided by estimators as well as the final estimate.
After selecting SELF SCHEDULE under the TOOLBOX, the SELF SCHEDULE REVIEW- TENTATIVE window will open.

If a project has a plan review history (either on a previous cycle or this is an RTAP or UPFIT to a previously approved SHELL PROJECT) the EPM system will link it to the previous review team, so make note of who that is if you see this pop up (you will need to schedule your review with those same people). For instructional purposes we will assume this does not apply in this case.
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Begin by checking the “Schedule After” date, if not already entered, correct or enter what is appropriate for your team.

Important to note here: EPM will search for plan examiners who have availability starting on the closest business day after this date, so you could get a review start date as soon as the next business day. The problem becomes with the GATE DUE DATE, which is set for TWO BUSINESS DAYS prior to the start of a review: (“Ready for Review” set on the 7th - you get a review start date for the 8th - deadline to submit the project would then be the 6th = a day earlier then intended). So, you may want to enter a date at least one day later so that it gives you the TWO BUSINESS DAYS prior that is needed. *See why it may be best left to your coordinator.

When ready to run the EPM auto-scheduler, click CHECK AVAILABILITY.

Notice the actions on the screen and wait to let this process cycle through before moving on to anything else.
When auto-scheduler has checked for closest availability for a plans examiner in each trade/agency the results will look like this:

- Note all information in red (Plans Examiner and their review start date).
- There is a good possibility that not all disciplines will be on the same day (like they are here) but rather spread out to the 1st available plans examiner in each trade/agency. Your project coordinator is charged with presenting a schedule that has all of the needed trades/agencies starting their review within no more than 5 business days of each other so they are skilled in understanding the impacts of manipulating schedules so that can happen – you will not have all of that information available and so will need to accept what is provide here, or change the “Ready” and “Check Availability” again to try to get a better schedule (one where the start dates are within no more than 5 business days of each other).
If you prefer, instead of the auto-scheduler, you can also select a specific plans examiner through the pull-down selection at each trade/agency:

- Note, this is where things can get complicated – you need to follow the conventions of selecting a plans examiner provided at the beginning of this module.
- Take care in that you will have the option to inadvertently assigning a part-time reviewer, or one who is assigned only to a specific type of project or process (i.e. MEGA or BIM, etc.) and not know it.

There are many pitfalls in self scheduling so it is always advised that you let your coordinator know you have done this so that they can check behind you and make any corrections if needed.
Once schedule is acceptable (keep in mind the 1st start day and remember that you will need to have all fees secured and project files submitted no later than noon, 2 business days prior to that), hit **SUBMIT**.

The screen will again direct you to wait while the schedule is processing. Do not advance until this is complete.

Because when self scheduling, the system intuitively knows that the “tentative schedule” step, where one needs to ACCEPT/REJECT the schedule, is not needed, look instead for a final confirmation to pop up. Once you hit “**OK**”, the schedule is blocked off and reserved.
Once completed, the project HISTORY page will open back up. Note the REVIEW STATUS where the complete review schedule will be listed.

Scroll down to the last few entries under the HISTORY as well. There you will see the hyperlink to the SCHEDULE.PDF you created as well as the auto-confirmation that you have accepted the schedule. Carefully review your SCHEDULE DETAILS so that you are fully aware of all deadlines, pre-paid fee requirements as well as packaging and formatting notes (scroll through PDF).

The project is now committed to this schedule and its deadlines. Be mindful of the cancellation policy and deadline. If changes need to be made, the review will need to be cancelled and scheduling will need to begin again.
You have successfully completed the training module on how to self schedule.

If you have additional questions, please contact any Project Coordinator or Controller at 980-314-CODE 📞