

NASSAU COUNTY

NEW YORK

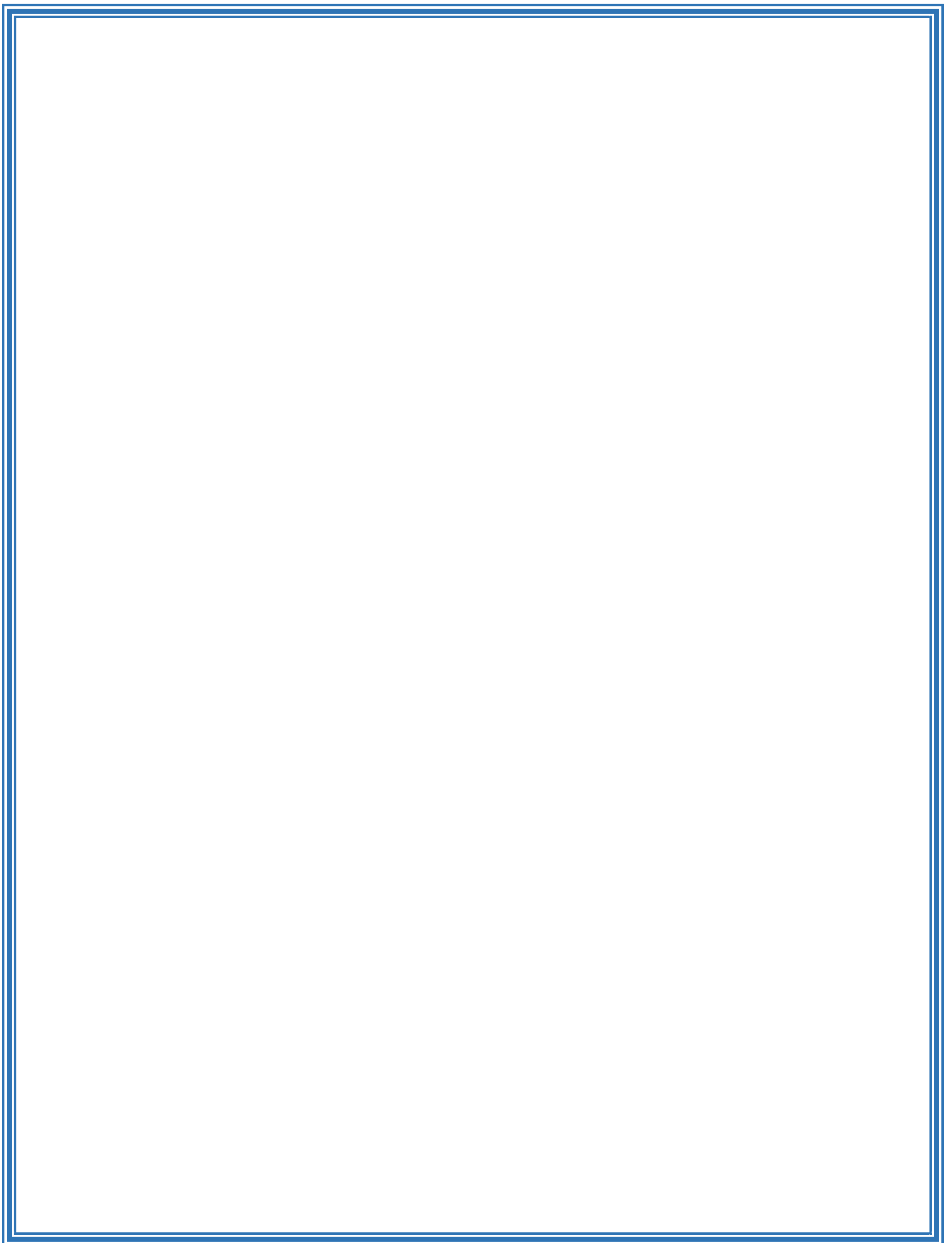
Review of the Town of North Hempstead Building Department

Permitting Process

February 2024



ELAINE PHILLIPS
Nassau County Comptroller





Review of the Town of North Hempstead Building Department – Permitting Process

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Executive Summary

The following pages contain the results of my Office's review of the Town of North Hempstead Building Department's Permitting Process. After being asked in July of 2022 by the Town of North Hempstead Supervisor to conduct a review of the Building Department's operations, my Office conducted an assessment of the Department's various functions. It quickly became apparent to us that an area of high concern to constituents was the efficiency of the permitting process. As such, this review, which covered the period of January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2023, focused on this permitting process, to determine if the Town is meeting the needs of its constituents.

Since the inception of this review in August of 2022, there have been improvements at the Building Department, many of which were developed as a result of direct observations and recommendations made by my team during the review process.

This Report describes a variety of operational and efficiency issues. Many of these issues were brought on by mismanagement at the highest level of Town Government and by a Town Board that effectively controlled Departmental decision making, hampering its ability to bring about the technological and cultural change needed to make the necessary improvements.

My Office has conducted an objective, methodical and detailed review of each of the phases of the permitting process. While conducting this review, we made a concerted effort to take the time to hear from all affected parties: residents, members of the Town Administration, commissioners and staff members of the Department, and architects and design professionals.

This thorough review culminates with recommendations for improvement, which I believe will assist the Town and the Department in better serving their constituents.

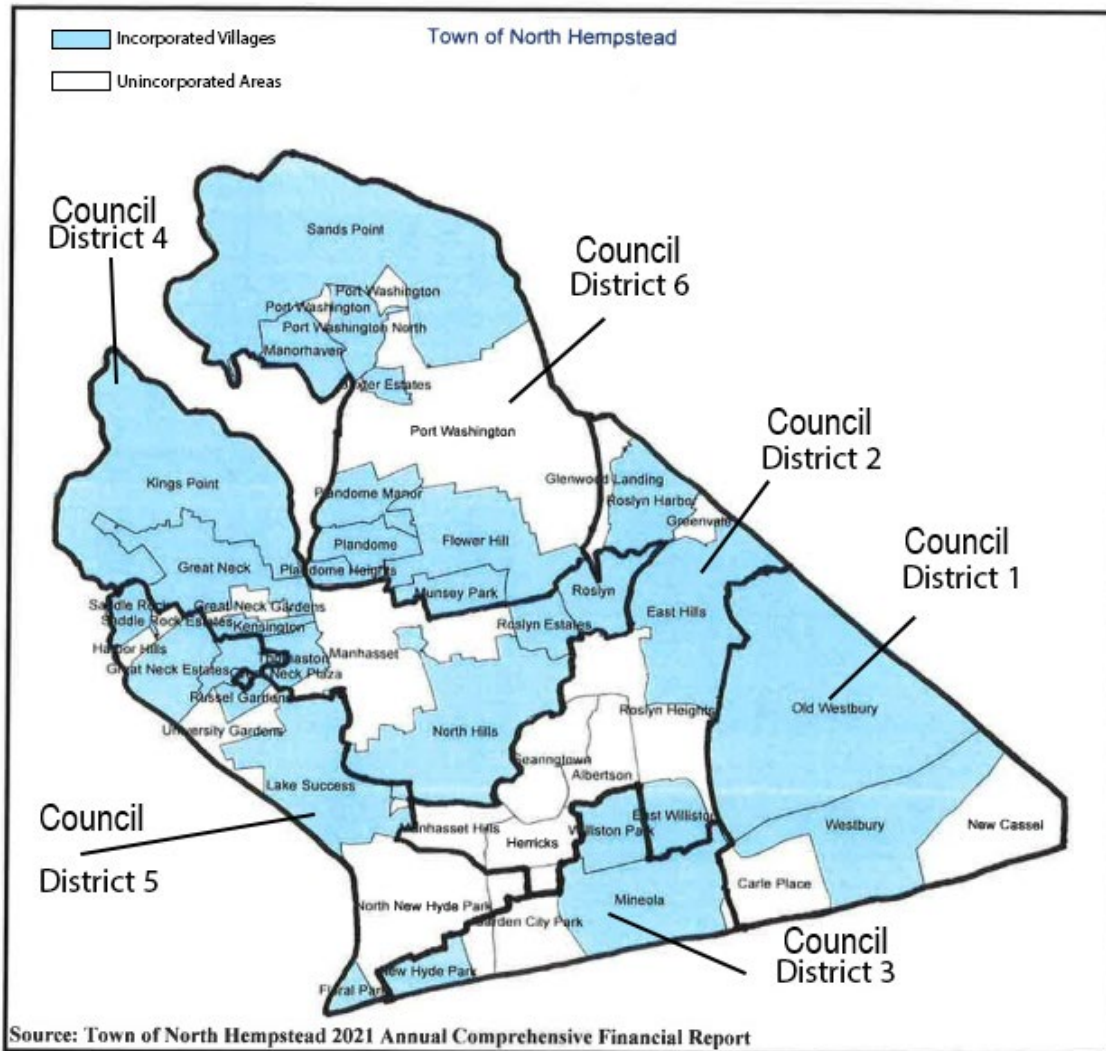
-Comptroller Elaine Phillips

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Background

The Town of North Hempstead (ToNH) Department of Building, Safety, Enforcement and Inspection (Building Department) is responsible for the administration of New York State and ToNH Building Codes as they relate to property, buildings and construction within the unincorporated areas of the Town of North Hempstead, indicated in white on the map below. These unincorporated areas include approximately 30,000 residential and 4,000 commercial properties.



One of the Building Department's primary responsibilities is the processing of building permits. The process includes the intake of permit applications, maintenance of building/permit related documentation, issuance of permits, inspections of work performed, and issuance of permit close-out certificates (such as certificates of occupancy or completion). The Building Department also issues professional licenses for plumbers, electricians, and sign and fence erectors.

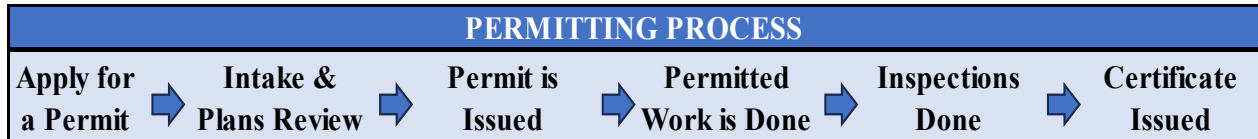
During the audit period the Building Department had 51 full-time staff.

Background

Building Permits

The Building Department is responsible for processing more than 40 types of residential and commercial permits including:

Building	Fence	Plumbing
Demolition	Gas	Sign
Drainage	HVAC	Solar
Electrical	Oil	Tree Removal



Permits are required for new building projects and may be required for alterations to existing properties.

The Building Department also issues “maintain” permits for construction, improvements, or alterations for work that has already begun and/or been completed without a permit.

See Appendix A for details about the permit application and issuance process; Appendix B for a complete list of applications, permits, and types of certificates and licenses; Appendix C for details about the inspection and certificate issuance process; and Appendix D for the types of inspections.

Building Department Operational Statistics

According to data provided by the Town of North Hempstead Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (IT), the Building Department processed an average of 8,447 applications and 5,813 permits per year from 2019 through 2022. In 2022, the Building Department received 7,177 applications and issued 5,959 permits.

Applications & Permits		
Year	Number of Applications Filed	Number of Permits Issued
2019	8,847	6,537
2020	7,145	4,896
2021	10,618	5,858
2022	7,177	5,959
TOTAL	33,787	23,250

Source: Data provided by ToNH IT.
Note: A permit may be issued in a year other than the year in which the application was filed.

Implementation of A New Building Department Computer System

In 2019 the Town issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for new computer software for the Building Department. After reviewing the proposals submitted in response to the RFP, the Town entered into a professional services agreement with Citizenserve Online Solutions LLC to provide new permit processing software to the Department and to create an online portal (MyToNH) through which constituents and professionals could submit building permit applications.

The Building Department began using Citizenserve in November 2020 to accept applications from the public for residential building permits, records requests and professional license applications. The Building Department began using Citizenserve for permit processing on October 5, 2021.

Audit Findings

Finding 1

Problems with Implementation of the Citizenserve Online Portal, MyToNH

The Town of North Hempstead launched an online permitting system, but the implementation of the portal and operational components resulted in frustration and dissatisfaction among constituents and employees of the Building Department.

In June of 2019, the Town of North Hempstead launched a project to develop a new constituent-facing portal branded MyToNH. This portal was developed using Citizenserve Online Solutions software. The long-term goal of the project for the Town was to enable constituents to interact with the Town's Building, Code Enforcement (a division of Public Safety), Highways, Planning and Zoning Departments remotely via the internet. The specific goal of the project for the Building Department was to accept all building related requests (such as permits, licenses, and records) digitally and for Building Department staff to use the Citizenserve software to process requests electronically.

In the 17 months that followed, implementation progress was slow, but in November 2020, the Town did a "soft rollout" of the first phase to accommodate the capacity restrictions of government buildings brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

On November 9, 2020, the then-Supervisor of the Town of North Hempstead issued the following press release:

**Town Launches Customer Care Software to Provide Online Building
Department Services for Residents**
North Hempstead first in State to use the modern, intuitive Citizenserve

North Hempstead Town Supervisor Judi Bosworth and the Town Board are proud to announce the unveiling of the first phase of the new Citizenserve software platform. Using this software, the Town will provide online Building Department services for residents. North Hempstead will be the first municipality in New York State to use Citizenserve.

"This modern, intuitive, and easy-to-use software system will provide complete customer care to help our municipality provide online services to our residents," said Supervisor Judi Bosworth. "With the COVID-19, we saw how important it was to be able to connect with our residents using technology. Citizenserve will help enhance the building department processes by making it quicker by decreasing waiting times, submitting applications, and paying for applications online. The goal will be to eventually manage the entire permit and licensing system online from intake, through plans review and on to inspections."

The Citizenserve portal can be accessed directly at www.myTONH.com and will enable users to submit building applications, apply for park permits and pay for these applications online. The first phase will allow online submissions of residential permits, records requests, and professional licenses. Access for commercial submissions will come soon after.

Audit Findings

Implementation of the online application system provided a COVID-safe way for residents and contractors to move projects forward during the pandemic. Instead of the usual 70-80 people visiting the Building Department's Intake Division's front desk daily for residential permits, records request, and professional licenses, these activities could now be done remotely.

Members of the Town's Administration and the Building Department acknowledged that the public-facing portal was not well-developed at the time of the soft rollout. Its operation was not intuitive, it lacked explanations of the dozens of application types and their requirements, and applicants – both homeowners and industry professionals – found the site hard to navigate and utilize.

Citizenserve Implementation Timeline

June 2019

Town of North Hempstead launched a project to develop with Citizenserve a constituent-facing portal branded MyToNH.

November 9, 2020

Then-Supervisor of the Town issued a press release announcing the upcoming launch of Citizenserve software for online Building Department services.

January 2021

Town Administration met with Citizenserve to discuss mutual frustration with the implementation process. Decision was made to involve Building Department staff in the process for the first time, leading to significant advancement of the project.

October 5, 2021

Town IT Department migrated all data from prior software (AMANDA) but not paper historical records into Citizenserve. Citizenserve went live and the prior system was inactivated.

February 2022

The permit closure process (issuance of a certificate) was made functional in Citizenserve.

Individuals who were directly involved with the project implementation reported that the limited development from June 2019 to November 2020 was the result of the Administration initially seeing this project as an Information Technology (IT) project. The then-Town Supervisor designated the IT Commissioner as the Town's implementation project lead without involving the affected departments: Building, Planning, Zoning, Highways, Public Safety/Code Enforcement.

In January 2021, a meeting took place between representatives of the Town's Administration and Citizenserve as there was frustration on both sides.

After this meeting, the Implementation Lead at Citizenserve was changed and the project was refocused to concentrate on the Building Department's internal processes. For the first time in the development, subject matter experts from the Building Department became involved in weekly meetings.

These changes led to significant advancement in the project's progress. On October 5, 2021, the Town's IT Department migrated all data from the Building Department's prior software (AMANDA) into Citizenserve. This migration did not include the scanning and uploading of paper historical property records. Town Administration determined this migration date to be the "Go-Live" date for Citizenserve and the AMANDA legacy system was inactivated.

As a result, the Building Department was forced to make the transition into using Citizenserve for processing permits. **Leadership and staff at the Building Department reported that due to the condensed timeframe for development between the refocusing of the project in January 2021 and the October 2021 Go-Live, they were not ready for Citizenserve to be implemented at that time.**

Audit Findings

Additionally, the new system was initially focused on Permit Application Intake, Plans Examination and Permit Pending processes. The permit close-out process was not fully functional within Citizenserve until late January or February 2022. Individuals who were directly involved with the project reported that the permit closure process was developed as more of an “afterthought” after the implementation.

Citizenserve Processes Inefficiently Designed

The Town chose to develop a permitting process based on individual permit applications rather than a project-based structure, which has resulted in duplicative work for both applicants and reviewers.

The MyToNH portal requires a separate application for each permit within a project. Although the building permit is considered the “parent” permit and the other associated permits, such as plumbing, gas, HVAC, etc., are considered the “child” permits, each child permit requires a separate application. **As a result, there is repetitive submission of the same information.**

Plan Examiners manually delete duplicate documents within a project file so that Citizenserve is not cluttered with redundant documentation. This data cleansing process is time consuming and unnecessary and causes delays in the Plan Examiners’ review.

Plan Examiners and Department leadership would prefer to have Citizenserve reorganized to assign a project number as an umbrella for all parent building and associated child permits within the entire project.

Permit-Based System Does Not Support Property-Based Look-Up

Among the Administration’s goals for the Citizenserve project was to implement a constituent-facing portal that allows for both public and applicant-based access. A property-based system would associate each record with a property so that a user could easily view all current and historic permit information related to their property.

The portal developed by the Town was not designed in this manner. It was designed as a permit-based system in which each permit is a standalone record. Property owners can only view information about permit applications they submitted through MyToNH and are not able to access information about applications submitted by previous owners of the same property.

In order to see previous permits related to their property, homeowners are required to file a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request, wait for a response from the Town, then schedule an appointment to visit the Building Department’s Records Room, where they can review these paper files. Full public access to property records, although an available feature of the Citizenserve software, has not been implemented.

A property-based permitting system is more efficient and user-friendly, allowing property owners to view all historic and current activity on their property in one place. The owner could search a property record regardless of whether they have a current application or request. The Building Commissioner and Citizenserve agree that it is more efficient for permit processing to be organized by property. **Citizenserve has the capability to organize files by property and to provide public access to the files, which is a feature utilized by other municipalities.**

Audit Findings

Historic Files not Uploaded to the New System

Although ToNH migrated all data from the Building Department's prior software into Citizenserve before the Go-Live in October 2021, they did not upload all historical information about the properties within the Town. The existing historical file for each property, which are paper files, were not scanned and uploaded. As such, residents have to submit a FOIL request to see information about their own properties.

At the time of the audit, a neighboring Town was preparing to launch a new computer-based permit processing system. Representatives of that Town informed auditors that they were scanning all paper documents into the new system doing *before they go live*. This will allow for all historical activity associated with any property to be readily available to applicants and staff.

Five days before the data migration and Go-Live of MyToNH, on September 30, 2021, the Town Board passed a resolution authorizing the execution of a contract with US Imaging for scanning services of up to \$500,000 annually over a five-year period to be utilized by the Building Department and the Town Clerk to scan in historical information. When asked, the then-Chief of Staff was unable to explain why these services were not utilized toward preparation of the Citizenserve permit processing system. **At the time of this report, historical information about properties still had not been uploaded.**

Constituent-Facing Portal Was Not Well-Developed Prior to Go-Live

Building Department leadership and staff reported that they were very concerned in October 2021 that the constituent-facing MyToNH was not fully built out prior to the Go-Live. At that time, the public-facing screens offered limited options: apply for permit, request a record, apply for a license (plumber, electrician), and contact the Building Department.

The then-Chief of Staff indicated to auditors that they knew from the beginning that a video tutorial for constituents would be imperative for the success of MyToNH. They reported that they did not direct the development of a tutorial prior to the October 2021 Go-Live because it was their understanding that significant modification would be made after the launch and they did not want to cause user confusion.

The Go-Live of MyToNH went ahead despite these concerns in order to meet the demands to implement the project prior to the end of the then-Supervisor's term. The IT Commissioner reported that although he attempted to explain to the prior Administration that this project was more than just an IT project, no member of the Town's communications team was involved to consult on the design of the MyToNH portal with the user experience in mind.

This public interface remained the same from October 2021 until May 2023, nearly 20 months after the Go-Live, when a revamped version of MyToNH was rolled out. The new version of the public facing portal was easier to read and navigate, but the improvements were essentially cosmetic. The website still had no video tutorial and no instructions for users, and the FAQ page was not updated to reflect more current or detailed information.

Importance of the public interface was confirmed when auditors observed interactions between constituent walk-ins and the Building Department's Intake Division staff. (See more in Finding 4.)

Audit Findings

Dashboards of Citizenserve Was Not Well-Developed Prior to Go-Live

Elements of the internal Citizenserve dashboard used for process flow by the Building Department were not well designed. For example, the **Permit Review** screen in Citizenserve is incomplete and difficult to navigate. It includes just three sections for each permit: (1) Intake Review, (2) Plan Examination Review, and (3) Permit Pending, (See screenshot below) which is not inclusive of the entire permit process. The process also includes two additional steps: Inspections and Close-Out/Certificate Issuance.

ROUTE NAME		PERMIT #	STATUS			
RESIDENTIAL SOLAR PANEL REVIEW ROUTE		[REDACTED]	PLANS APPROVED			
ACTIVITY TYPE	DEPARTMENT	ASSIGNED TO	STATUS	DUE	COMPLETED	
Intake Review	Buildings	[REDACTED]	Application Processed	02/14/2023	02/14/2023	
Plan Examination Review	Plan Examination	[REDACTED]	Plans Approved	02/15/2023	02/21/2023	
Permit Pending	Buildings	[REDACTED]	Application Processed	02/23/2023	02/24/2023	

This makes navigation to desired information difficult, as users cannot see in one consolidated dashboard when a permit was actually issued, when the final inspection associated with the permit was passed, when the back-end review was completed, and when the certificate was issued and the permit was closed. Staff looking for information about these other milestones events for a permit must click through the other subsections of the permit file to piece together the information.

Unlike other permit screens, the Sign Permit Review screen in Citizenserve features all five steps (see screen shot below).

ROUTE NAME		PERMIT #	STATUS			
SIGN PERMIT REVIEW ROUTE		[REDACTED]	IN PROCESS			
ACTIVITY TYPE	DEPARTMENT	ASSIGNED TO	STATUS	DUE	COMPLETED	
Intake Review	Buildings	[REDACTED]	Application Processed	09/22/2023	09/27/2023	
Plan Examination Review	Plan Examination	[REDACTED]	Review on Hold-Missing Information	02/14/2024	10/17/2023	
Permit Issuance	Buildings	[REDACTED]				
Sign Inspection	Buildings	[REDACTED]				
Close Out/ Certificate	Buildings	[REDACTED]				

Utilizing this model for building permits would be beneficial both for constituents tracking their projects and for Building Department staff who use the dashboards for workflow.

Audit Findings

Underutilization of Citizenseve's Capabilities

The Town chose not to utilize most automatic notifications and direct email communication in MyToNH. The Citizenseve platform provides the ability to program user notifications for each activity on each permit, license, and case type. The Town's decision not to utilize these functions undermines the efficacy of the portal's intended goal of improving communication with constituents. (See more on Communication in Finding 4.)

Underutilization of Citizenseve's capabilities as a process flow management tool by all Divisions within the Building Department contributes to a lack of standardization, efficiency, and quality control.

Finding 2

New Organization of Town Government Negatively Affected Implementation of Citizenserve

Following the November 2021 election, major restructuring of Town of North Hempstead Administration caused confusion and impeded the success of the new online permitting system.

Changes in Town government coincided with the MyToNH Go-Live. Following the November 2021 election, there were significant changes to the Town's administrative structure. Four senior staff members of the outgoing Administration were moved into new job titles that were budgeted and reported to the Town Board. (See red, green, blue and brown boxes on the organizational charts on the next page.)

This reorganization resulted in a bifurcated or dual government and caused confusion among department heads within the Town. With senior staff of the previous Administration reporting directly to the Town Board, it became unclear who held what authority and to whom the staff were required to report. This led to confusion regarding from whom they were required to take directions regarding the continued implementation of MyToNH and the correction of problems and errors in the implementation.

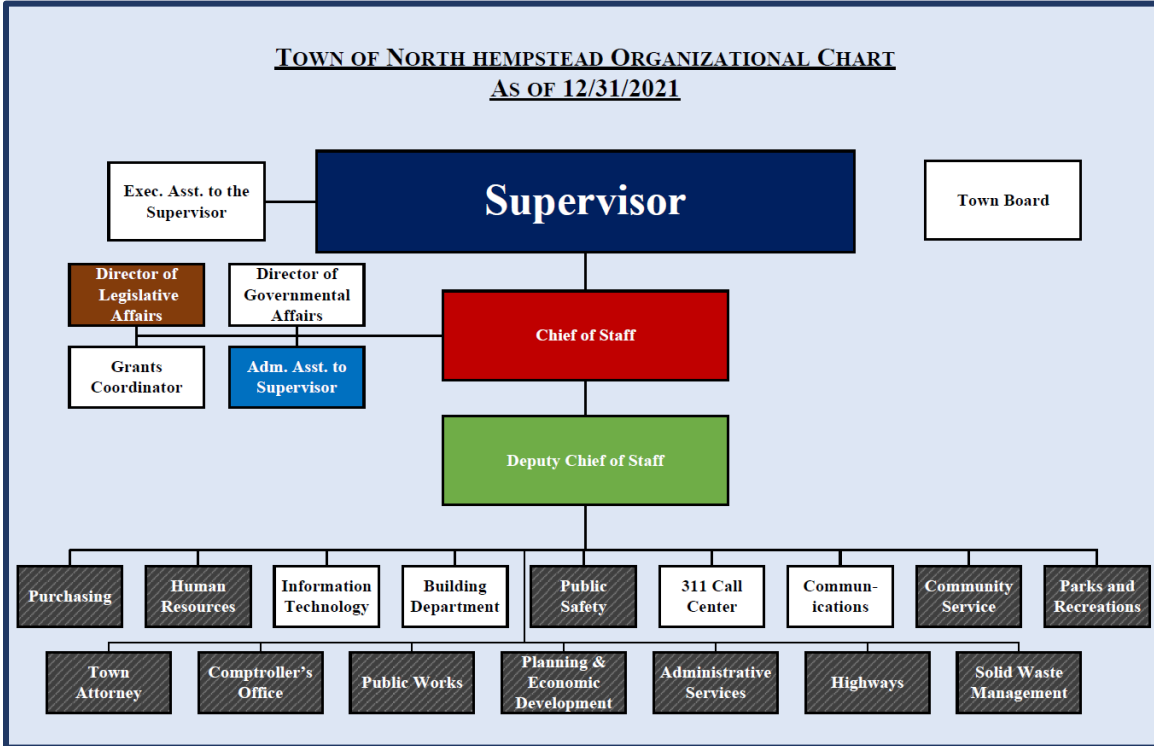
The creation of four new senior positions also increased the Town Board's full-time employee budget by \$502,000.

The Building Department Commissioner reported that with the former Chief of Staff, former Deputy Chief of Staff, and former Director of Special Projects (Admin. Asst. to the Supervisor) reporting directly to the Town Board, it was unclear who could approve operational decisions concerning MyToNH. It was also unclear how to remedy what they saw as significant issues, including a decision to route constituents' Building Department inquiries to the ToNH's 311 Call Center instead of staffing the Building Department with constituent contact people (see Finding 4).

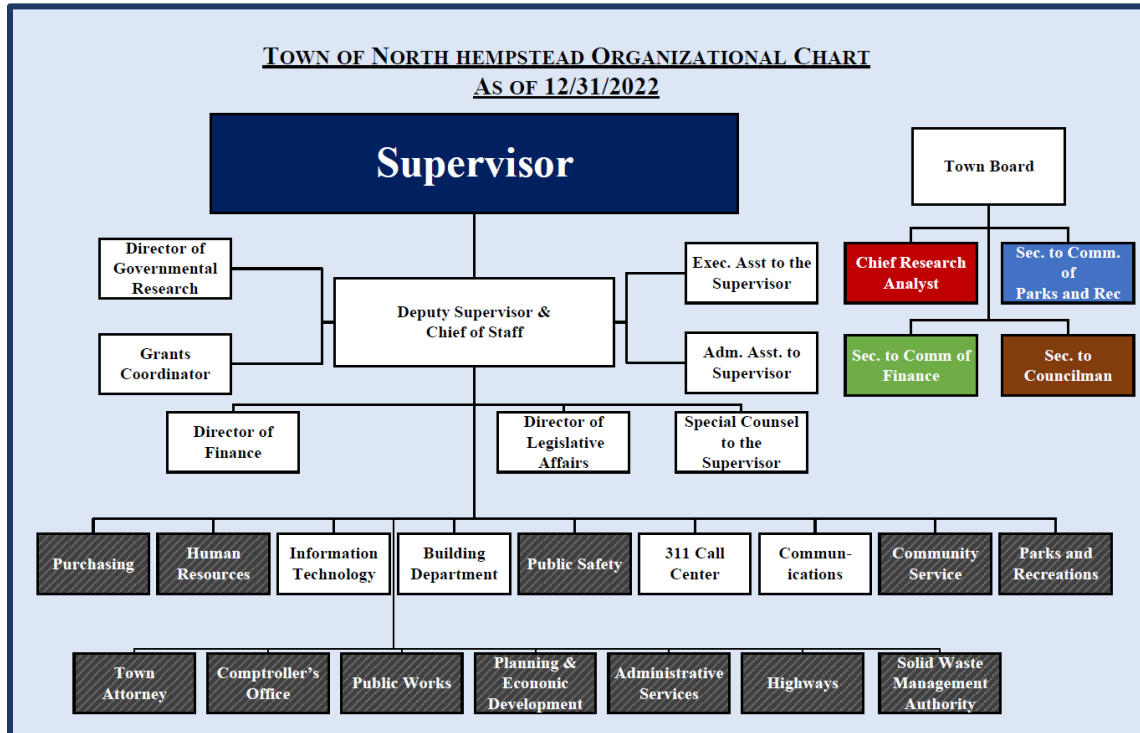
At least one department commissioner reported continuing to meet with the former Chief of Staff and former Deputy Chief of Staff just as they had prior to the change in administration.

Audit Findings

Before November 2021 Election



After



Finding 3

Operational Inefficiencies Were Found Within the Building Department

Building Department staff were not adequately trained to use the Citizenserve permit processing system, and the Department lacked operational oversight and standardized procedures.

Staff Training

There was disagreement between the Administration and the Building Department about the adequacy of training for Building Department staff prior to the Go-Live of the MyToNH portal:

- The IT Commissioner reported to auditors that from March 2021 to October 2021, group and one-on-one training on how to use the program were made available to the Building Department staff.
- The Building Department Commissioner, however, believes the training was not adequate and that the trainings provided were not as inclusive and robust as they should have been. The training sessions were webinar-based and concentrated on the basic usage of Citizenserve but were not tailored to MyToNH. The Commissioner and staff in all phases – Intake, Plans Examination and Inspection – reported that the lack of thorough training contributed to frustration and inefficiency among staff.

Citizenserve’s software and service agreement with the Town includes unlimited training and support. Citizenserve states that it can tailor training to any particular need.

Evidence of inefficiency and inconsistency was observed in the day-to-day operations of the Intake, Plans Examination, Permit Pending, Inspection and Back-End Review Divisions, which supports these claims of inadequate training.

Intake Division

Background on Intake Division

The Intake Division is the “front desk” of the Building Department. Intake is responsible for the acceptance of applications, reviewing applications for completeness, addressing missing items with applicants, fielding applicant/constituent inquiries, and forwarding completed application information to the Plans Examination Division for Code compliance review.

Building permit applications require supporting documentation (such as those listed in the box to the right). During in-person intake, the staff verifies whether the required documents are included and if they are appropriate and legible. When an applicant uploads their application via MyToNH, Intake staff are expected to conduct the same review before advancing the application packet to Plans Examination.

- | |
|---|
| <p>Types of Supporting Documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Plan Review Checklist✓ Zoning Analysis Sheet✓ Construction Drawings✓ Property Survey✓ Site Plan✓ Environmental Form✓ Owner’s Authorization Form |
|---|

Intake does not adequately verify the quality of documents submitted

Errors in permit application supporting documentation, especially in the online submissions, are not always caught, which causes undue delays in the Plans Examination review process as the Plan Examiner has to request corrected documents before they can begin their review. This issue also demonstrates a need for better training, which Building Department management indicated would be provided.

Audit Findings

Plans Examination Division

Background on Plans Examination Division

The Plans Examination Division reviews permit application documentation for compliance with the Town Zoning Code, the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code (Uniform Code) and the State Energy Conservation Construction Code (Energy Code). The Plan Examiners perform their reviews in four steps which are:

1. **Initial Document Review** – The Plan Examiner reviews documents received from the Intake Division to verify all the necessary documents were sufficiently submitted (e.g., correct property, correct and legible documents, etc.)
2. **Historical Review** – The Plan Examiner obtains the historical file for the property from the Records Room since the information is not in the system and compares what the Town has on file against the information that the applicant has provided; they check to see if any discrepancies exist, which may signify that work was performed without a permit.
3. **Town Zoning Code Review** – The application undergoes a Town of North Hempstead Zoning Code Review for compliance with Town Code for permitted uses, setbacks, maximum sizes, parking requirements, etc.
4. **NYS Uniform Building Code Review** – Plan Examiners verify that the application/plans are “substantially” in compliance with the NYS Uniform Building Code and Energy Code.

If the application is missing required information or further clarification is needed, the Plan Examiner emails the applicant an Omission Letter via MyToNH indicating what additional information is required.

Problems in the Plans Examination Process

Inconsistent Omission Letters

The contents of an Omission Letter vary depending on which Plan Examiner is conducting the review. Some Plan Examiners write them in narrative format with a lot of verbiage and detail, while other Plan Examiners write the letter in a shorter bulleted format. Some Plan Examiners maintain their own template from which they select the relevant comments, while others create a new letter each time. The use of pre-written comments may make the Omission Letter process more efficient and communication with applicants more consistent. See Appendix E for examples of different styles of Omission Letters. **Citizenserve has the capability to provide an Omission Letter template customized to the Department’s requirements.**

Verify in Field Underutilized

Minor required changes can be noted on the plans by the Plan Examiner and marked “VIF” for Verify in Field rather than sending an Omission Letter, which requires the applicant to resubmit revised plans. The existing plan could be approved on the condition that when the Building Inspector visits the site at a later date, the change can be verified. This is a common convention in plan review and approval.

Some ToNH Plan Examiners utilize the VIF notation to prevent delaying plans unnecessarily, while others do not. This lack of standardization leads to inconsistent processing times and differing experiences among applicants.

Audit Findings

Manual Notes Not Uploaded to Citizenserve

Despite the adoption of the Citizenserve permit processing platform, some Plan Examiners continue to keep handwritten notes in paper files. Failure to upload plan review notes into Citizenserve hinders the Department by making potentially relevant information about an application unknown and unavailable to anyone else.

Manual Permit Fee Calculations with No Supervisory Review

According to Plan Examiners it is necessary to manually calculate permit fees due to the complexity of the Permit Fee Schedule (see Fee column in the chart below) and errors they have seen in the fees calculated by Citizenserve as currently programmed.

Example of Building Permit Fee Schedule*	
Type (Residential)	Fee Schedule
1 & 2 Family- New	\$100, plus \$14 for each \$1000 or fraction thereof of estimated cost
Alteration	\$50, plus \$14 for each \$1000 or fraction thereof of estimated cost
Renewal	\$200
Multi-Family	\$200, plus \$14 for each \$1000 or fraction thereof of estimated cost
Senior Housing	\$200, plus \$14 for each \$1000 or fraction thereof of estimated cost
Public Housing	\$200, plus \$14 for each \$1000 or fraction thereof of estimated cost
Accessory Structure	\$100, plus \$14 for each \$1000 or fraction thereof of estimated cost

*Recreation from fee schedule adopted by Board Resolution of April 4, 2017, which can be found at: <https://www.northhempsteadny.gov/filestorage/16253/17996/25226/2017-04-04.pdf> page 219.

After the Plan Examiner manually calculates the permit fee, they enter it into Citizenserve with no secondary review to ensure accuracy and integrity of fees charged (sometimes with no notes about the calculations). Due to the complexity of the calculation, best practices suggest that there be a secondary review, preferably by a supervisor, prior to the fee being finalized.

Small Computer Screens

With the implementation of MyToNH, paper-based plans are no longer submitted. Plan Examiners accustomed to reviewing large paper blueprints now view plans electronically. Reviewing large format digital plans on small computer screens is not optimal; the reviewer cannot see the plan in its entirety in one view and must repeatedly zoom in/out and scroll around. The Commissioner attempted to get the Plan Examiners bigger computer monitors, but this budget request was denied.

Permit Pending Division

Background on Permit Pending Division

Once an application passes Plans Examination review, it is moved to Permit Pending, a subsection of the Intake Division. An employee performs a summary review to verify that all documents have been completed, all insurances are up-to-date, and the final fees have been paid. Upon verification of all criteria being fulfilled, a permit can be issued.

Problems in the Permit Pending Review Process

There is only one employee who consistently performs the Permit Pending function. In their absence, other employees may help, but this did not appear to be routine. In early 2023, auditors were told that two additional employees were being cross trained to perform this function.

Inspection and Back-End Review Divisions

Background on Inspections and Back-End Review

Upon receipt of a permit, the applicant may contact the assigned Building Department Inspector associated with their permit to schedule inspections. Inspections are typically required prior to beginning work on a project, during construction and at the end of the project when work has been completed. Each Inspector schedules their own inspections on a first-come, first-served basis.

The type of inspections required will vary depending on the scope of work to be done. There are two classifications of inspections: (1) building inspections performed by Building Inspectors and (2) plumbing inspections performed by Plumbing Inspectors. See Appendix D for a listing of all inspections.

The number of inspections needed to close out a project is determined by the quality of the work performed. If work is found to be out of compliance with the approved plans and/or Building Codes, the Inspector will require corrective action, followed by re-inspection.

After a permitted project has passed all of its inspections, a detailed review, called a Back-End Review, of the project file is conducted. The Back-End Reviewer verifies that all necessary documents are on file and in good order.

Once the project has passed Back-End Review, the appropriate Certificate (such as a Certificate of Completion) is generated and the permit is closed. See Appendix B for a description of the types of different Certificates issued by the Building Department and Appendix C for a detailed description of the Inspection and Certification issuance process.

Problems in the Inspection Process

- Building and Plumbing Inspections are scheduled manually by phone/email outside of Citizenserve (despite Citizenserve being capable of handling this process).
- Building and Plumbing Inspectors do not schedule their inspections in a consistent manner. Each Inspector has a different scheduling methodology (e.g., Outlook email, Citizenserve email, phone call). This impedes the ability of management to proactively assess inspection schedules and creates inconsistent constituent experiences.
 - Plumbing Inspectors report that they used to have an employee who would perform all scheduling on their behalf, which allowed them to accomplish more inspections per day without the burden of the administrative work of scheduling.
 - Building Inspectors stated they would like more training on Citizenserve to understand all the features the program offers and to have the inspection process more standardized.
- There is no uniformity in the way Inspection information is entered into Citizenserve. For example, some “No Show” inspections were being marked as Failures instead of No-Shows, which results in data discrepancies.

Audit Findings

- There are no controls in the process to prevent a permit applicant from booking an initial inspection prematurely. When an Inspector receives a request for an inspection, they don't know if it is a fully issued permit unless they go into the Citizenserve system to verify. As a result, some inspections have been scheduled before the permit was actually issued, which wastes both the applicants' and the Inspectors' time.
- There is no listing of required inspections by permit or an overall inspection process flow for the constituent to see.
- Building Inspectors give their Department-issued cell phone numbers to some constituents, but not all, creating inequity in constituents' ability to contact them.
- No-shows, cancellations and repeat failures for Plumbing Inspections slow down the permitting process. With no limit to the number of re-inspections that can take place, there is no recourse for addressing no-show contractors or work that is found repeatedly non-compliant with the approved plans and/or Building Codes.

This results in frustration for both the Building Department Inspectors and the homeowners, as it allows contractors to potentially drag out jobs with no repercussions and also creates a backlog for other constituents' inspections. (This appears to affect Plumbing Inspections more than Building Inspections.)

Problems in the Back-End Review and Certificate Issuance Processes

- Short staffing in Back-End Review has created a bottleneck in the certificate process.
- The same employee performed both the initial Plans Examination Review and the final Back-End Review. Ideally the final review should be independent to ensure accuracy and completeness of all previous processes before a permit is closed-out.
- At the Commissioner's direction, a Typist-Clerk is using the Commissioner's Citizenserve username and password to sign certificates on his behalf. This creates a risk for potential improper system access as the Typist-Clerk has full access to the Commissioner's credentials.

IT Support Not Aligned with Department's Hours

In addition to the above, it is noted that the working hours of the Town's IT Department do not coincide with the operations of the Building Department. Building Department staff start work at 7:00 a.m. and the IT staff start at 9:00 a.m. This leaves the Building Department without critical IT support for the first two hours of every workday.

It would be beneficial for at least one IT person to be in the building at 7:00 a.m. when public-facing Town personnel start their days.

Audit Findings

Finding 4

Insufficient Communication with Constituents

Constituent satisfaction with the MyToNH portal is undermined by insufficient communication between the Building Department and permit applicants.

No Citizenserve Support or Tutorial for Constituency

One of the goals of the Citizenserve implementation was to enable constituents to submit Building Permit applications online in a self-serve model. From the time the MyToNH portal went live on October 5, 2021, however, the Citizenserve public-facing user interface was not intuitive, well-designed, or user-friendly. Constituents accessing the system had to learn the system on their own through trial and error, as there was and continues to be little to no support, tutorials or resources available to constituents to help them understand how to utilize the online service.

The results of this lack of support are clear. Based on observations of interactions between constituents and the Building Department's Intake Division, auditors found that:

- 75% of the constituents' tasks could have been performed without direct communication with the Building Department if constituents knew how to use MyToNH.
- 25% of the constituents' tasks required direct communication with the Department staff.

The then-Chief of Staff to the Administration indicated to auditors that they believed it was imperative to the portal's success that constituents be provided with assistance, such as video tutorial. They did not direct the development of such a tutorial prior to or after the Go-Live date because they were aware that there would be significant modification after the launch. The launch of MyToNH took place despite these concerns, to meet the then-Supervisor's year-end 2021 implementation deadline.

As of December 2023, there still was no video tutorial. Additionally, the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page on MyToNH, which should help users with the permitting process, is limited and difficult to understand.

Underutilization of Citizenserve's Communication Functions

The Town's agreement with Citizenserve includes the option of programming automated notifications to internal users (staff) and external users (applicants) when an action is taken on an application. It also includes optional functionality for email within the Citizenserve system and direct email exchanges between applicants and Department staff within the portal.

Of the 23 possible status changes or actions taken by staff, the MyToNH portal is only programmed to send an automatic email for the following situations:

- Notification that an application had been received,
- When the Intake Division is missing items on the application,
- When the Permit Pending Division needs additional information,
- When an issued permit expires, and
- When an application or permit is withdrawn or revoked.

Audit Findings

MyToNH does not notify the applicant directly by email of open issues, nor except in a few cases, does the applicant get notified by email of action they need to take or of application status changes. Local architects reported to Auditors that they do not receive an email notification indicating a project has an updated status; they have to login to MyToNH to see if it was updated.

Automatic notifications *are also not sent* when other significant events happen in the process, including, but not limited to:

- When the application is deemed complete by Intake and has moved to Plans Examination;
- When the application is approved by Plans Examination and is sent to Permit Pending;
- When an application has been deemed incomplete by Plans Examination and an Omission Letter has been sent;
- If a Notice of Disapproval is issued because the plans are not in compliance with the Zoning Code; and
- When a permit has been issued after an application has been deemed complete, met all required documentation, fees, and been approved by Building Department staff.

Most email exchanges take place outside of MyToNH, despite Citizenserve being capable of supporting two-way messaging. Omission Letters are sent via Citizenserve, but if the applicant replies directly to the message, it goes to the Plan Examiner's Town email address, taking the communication exchange outside of the Citizenserve platform.

From an internal user perspective, Plan Examiners receive an alert when a new document has been uploaded, but they do not know when all required documents have been uploaded, despite the fact that such a notification could be programmed. Therefore, the Omission Letters specifically instruct applicants to email the Plan Examiner only after they have uploaded all required documents.

Building Department Plans Examination staff have autonomy to decide whether to make phone calls or have meetings with applicants. Most staff at the Department choose to engage in the slower, less personal communication using Omission Letters rather than calling or emailing applicants.

Similarly, Building and Plumbing Inspectors schedule inspections with applicants/contractors via phone calls or emails. Although Inspectors are encouraged to share their cell phone numbers with applicants/contractors, they do not all comply.

The Building Commissioner indicated that he agreed that efficiency can be improved through direct constituent contact but has not made it a requirement for Building Department staff.

Audit Findings

311 Call Center and 311 Online Created Barriers to Direct Communication

Pursuant to Town policy, all phone call inquiries concerning the Building Department, building permits and MyToNH are routed through the Town's 311 Call Center system. Because of this, Building Department staff are not handling Building Department inquiries. The inquiries are entered by 311 staff into the 311 software application, not into Citizenserve.

When Citizenserve went live in October 2021, Call Center personnel were not trained on how to handle MyToNH questions. The IT Commissioner noted that they offered to train 311 Call Center operators on MyToNH procedures, but he was directed not to do this by the then-Administration.

If the 311 representative is not able to answer the constituent's Building Department related question, the representative can create a Service Request which is then sent to the Building Department for review and response. In addition, through 311 Online, constituents may enter their own "Service Request" for routing to the Building Department in one of nine categories:

- Application Status
- Certificate Status
- Construction Complaint
- Flood Plain Management
- General Question
- Housing Complaint
- Inspection Request
- Retaining Wall
- Suspect Work Without a Permit

In late 2022, a dedicated "pod" of 311 Call Center representatives was created to answer calls from residents concerning the Building Department. These representatives were also granted access to MyToNH in attempt to help them answer Building Department related inquiries, including looking up specific permit related questions.

The Commissioner of the Building Department reported that even with these representatives in place the system does not work. The Commissioner noted that:

- The 311 Call Center representatives report to a different department head;
- Building Department leadership has no insight into what questions are asked or what answers are given by the Call Center representatives; and
- Call Center representatives are not on site at the Building Department to access records or to be kept up to date on policies and procedures.

The Building Department Commissioner believes phone inquiries should be routed directly to constituent contact representatives within the Building Department where they could provide better constituent services. Inquiries can be entered and managed within Citizenserve and if they concern a specific permit or application, they can be routed directly to the appropriate staff handling the matter.

Additionally, constituents trying to contact the Building Department outside of 311 via the Town's general website are confronted with a barrier in contacting the Department as they are directed to MyToNH. Once in MyToNH, if the constituent clicks on "Contact Buildings" or "Contact the Building Department" they are not provided with a direct telephone number, email address, or contact form for the Building Department. Instead, they are directed to the MyToNH log-in. If they take the next step and create a log-in and password, once logged in, they can only make an inquiry specific to a particular property.

Audit Findings

Customer Satisfaction Surveys

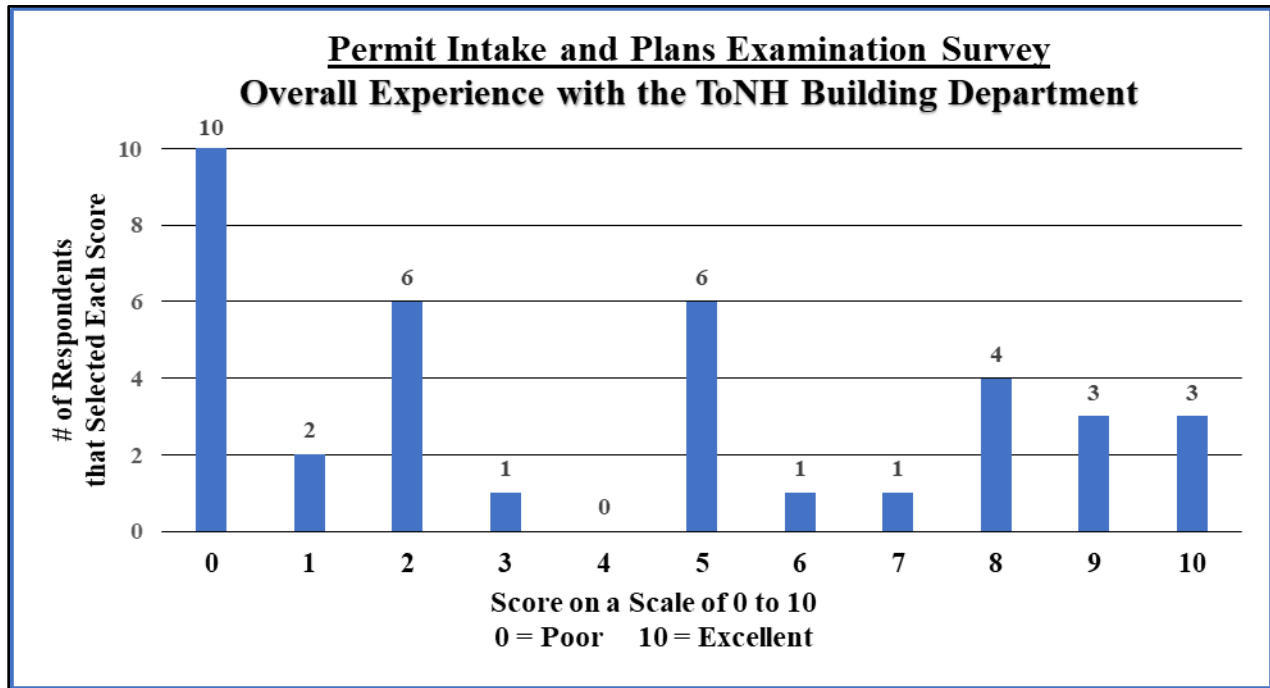
The Building Department had a customer satisfaction survey on their website when the audit first commenced. Auditors requested copies of all the completed surveys but were advised only six surveys were ever completed with the latest one being from 2016.

The audit team developed two email surveys using questions similar to the Department's survey. The team emailed one survey about the **Permit Intake and Plans Examination process** to a sample of 500 constituents who had applied for various permits from the Town's Building Department between January 1, 2020 through January 31, 2023. Another survey was emailed to 500 constituents who had **Building and/or Plumbing Inspections** with the Department during the same period. The questions in both surveys were designed to assess constituents' experience applying for and closing out permits.

Auditors asked the constituency to rate specific aspects of their interaction with the Building Department as well as their overall experience.

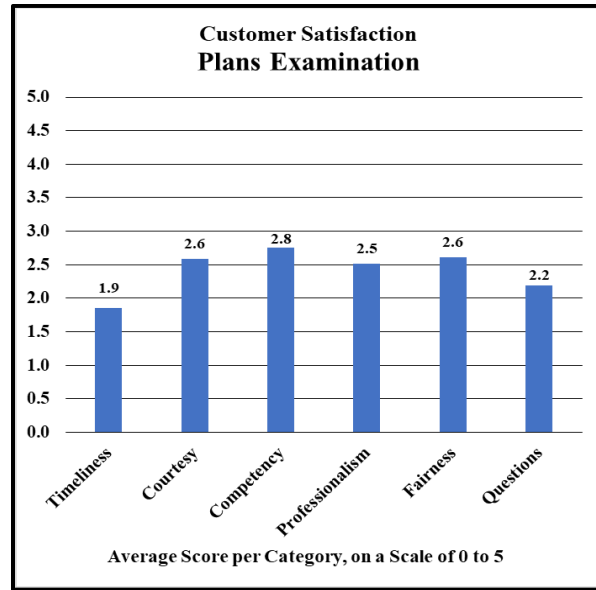
1. Permit Intake and Plans Examination Survey

Of the 41 constituents who responded to this survey, 37 rated their overall experience with the Building Department. 51% gave a rating of three or lower on a scale of 0-10 (with 0 being poor and 10 being excellent). 30% of constituents gave a rating of seven or higher indicating they had a positive overall experience.



When respondents were asked to rate specific aspects of their experience with the Building Department, the average customer satisfaction score for all aspects of the Intake process was 2.65 out of 5 and 2.43 out of 5 for the Plans Examination process (see chart on the next page). In the categories of courtesy, competency, and professionalism of employees, the staff did well, with approximately half of respondents choosing a score of 4 or 5 on a scale of 0 to 5. See Appendix F for the complete poll and anonymized results of all responses.

Audit Findings



While this might suggest an “average” experience, a closer look at the data revealed that most responses fell in the low or high range, indicating significant inconsistency in customer service in the Building Department.

A question was included that allowed open-text comments on the overall process.

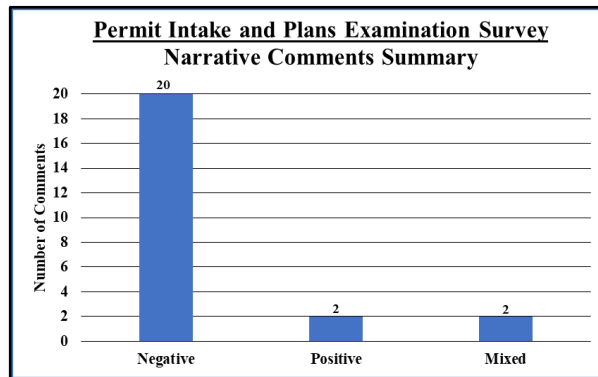
24 respondents offered narrative comments:

- 20 were negative
- 2 were positive
- 2 were mixed.

See Appendix G for these specific comments.

Several themes emerged from these comments:

- 16 mention length of time
 - “Every process was so slow...”
 - “It should not take years to legalize a home...”
 - “THERE HAS TO BE A BETTER WAY’...I'M BLEEDING TIME AND MONEY AND STILL WAITING FOR APPROVED PLANS...”
- 9 mention poor communication
 - “Pick up phones / response to emails”
 - “Very difficult to get in touch with anyone.”
- 7 mention the online portal or permit procedures
 - “The portal is a joke, items get lost, can’t find applications, no one seems to know how it works, extremely slow.”
 - “The portal was not used effectively...”
 - “THE PORTAL IS VERY SLOW AND APPLICATION PROCESS TO FILL OUT INFO FOR PERMITS IS MORE DIFFCULT THAN OTHER TOWNSHIPS OR VILLAGES.”
 - “The on-line permit process for minor home renovations is abysmal.”



Audit Findings

- “The permits that run parallel to the building permit, such as plumbing, gas, drainage, HVAC, infrastructure should all update or relate to each other as the primary permit, the building permit, has all the necessary information already there. its a lot of redundancy.”
- 5 mention customer service
 - “The building department employees were very rude and combative.”
 - [Staff]...range from totally professional and courteous to outright schmucks.”
- 4 suggest an impact on the likelihood of people moving to ToNH or contractors/architects being willing to work in ToNH
 - “...by far the worst aspect of my construction project. The lengthy timelines were horrible and prevent people from moving to areas where the Town building department has jurisdiction.”
 - “[The Building Department’s] actions... affected the normal plans of people who want to move here, because everyone knows that our building department is very difficult to deal with...”

Of the two positive comments, the following was noted:

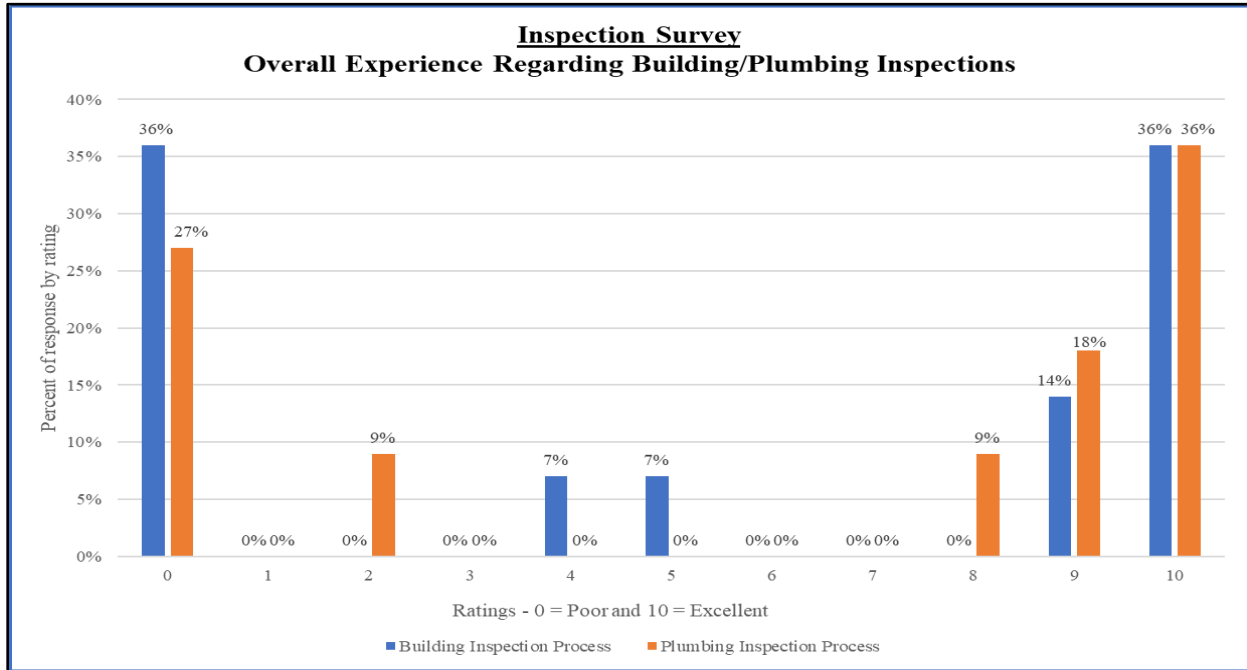
- “The building department staff in Manhasset has been wonderful.”
- “I was concerned that the process to get open permits closed would be overwhelming but was surprised at the level of attention and professionalism of everyone I dealt with in the department... I have only good things to say about the building department.”

The survey results support the findings of this audit – that constituents’ experience with the Building Department are inconsistent and often negative and that the Department has problems with process, communications, training, and oversight in both the Intake/Application process and the Plans Examination process.

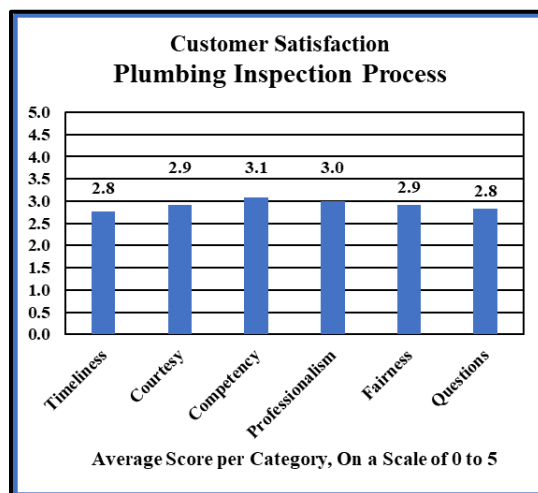
Audit Findings

2. Building and Plumbing Inspection Survey

Of the 17 constituents who responded to this survey, 14 rated their overall experience with the Building Inspection process and 11 rated their overall experience with the Plumbing Inspection process. Combining these results, 9 gave a rating of three or lower on a scale of 0-10 (with 0 being poor and 10 being excellent), 14 gave a score of eight or higher, with just 2 scores falling in the mid-range.



Respondents were asked to rate specific aspects of their experience with the Building and/or Plumbing Inspection Processes in the categories of timeliness, courtesy, competency, professionalism, fairness, and having their questions addressed. The average customer satisfaction score for all aspects of Building Inspections process was 3.02 out of 5 and 2.92 out of 5 for the Plumbing Inspections. See Appendix H for the complete poll results of all responses.



Again, while these result might suggest an “average” experience, most responses fell in the low or high range, indicating significant inconsistency in the Inspection process.

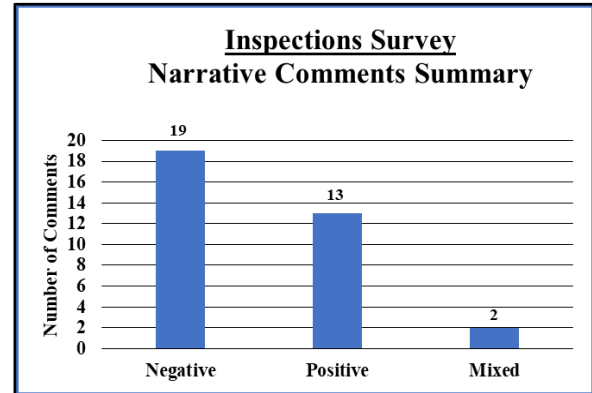
Audit Findings

Questions were included that allowed open-text comments on the overall Inspection process and on specific Building Department experiences.

Twelve respondents submitted comments on specific inspection experiences, amounting to 34 total comments:

- 19 were negative
- 13 were positive
- 2 were mixed.

See Appendix I for these specific comments.



Positive comments included:

- “Construction inspections are scheduled fairly quick.”
- “Without naming names, some of the [Building Department staff] that are now gone... removed & retired were dirty...[Current Inspectors] are super honest and fair... respectful, knowledgeable, understanding, reasonable... absolute gentleman...totally honorable, straight shooter!”
- “very Courteous to my staff, Prompt on inspection Times and Very Informative to my Field staff on inspections”
- “they are doing a great Job. Incredible Improvement from the past making inspections and permits more efficient. End result better service to the tax payers and savings to the contractors Time”

Negative comments included:

- “...Every job the rules change.”
- “...It can take upwards of 8-10 weeks to get everything squared away to help a resident that is in need of emergency work...”
- “Plumbing inspections are usually the ones that sometimes take 2-3 weeks and the response is not that prompt.”
- “The arrogance, pompous, almighty attitude with almost zero accountability must end. I have architects who refuse to draw prints for TONH...”
- “...The only exception is the 311 call I understand the need for time in the morning to organize your days work, but if there is a question or a problem to reach out to a particular inspector, its almost impossible.”

Constituents were also provided with opportunities to provide suggestions for improving the Building Department. Of note:

- “Assign more employees for scheduling and maybe add another inspector or 2 to expedite the inspections”
- “Become transparent. Why, in the day and age of instant communication, can’t you get a phone call, text, something that links the inspector to the person waiting at the job site...”
- “The TONH should hire supervisors that occasionally oversee the field inspectors to ensure that everyone is being treated equally or to follow up on permit inspections. Additionally, the inspection appointment process needs to be changed. The inspectors cannot handle making their own appointment.”

Audit Findings

Feedback From External Stakeholders

The County's audit team made a concerted effort to hear from all affected parties: residents, members of ToNH Administration, commissioners and staff, and architects and design professionals. Auditors held meetings, conducted interviews and attended the American Institute of Architects (AIA) annual conference in April 2023.

Auditors spoke with a local architect who communicated with the audit team on behalf of 15 architects and design professionals that do business in the Town. This architect supplied the auditors with a listing of recommendations, which they have tried in the past to share with the Town Board. Based on their experiences dealing with the Building Department, they had suggestions for improving the efficiency of the permit approval process. See Appendix J.

While attending the AIA's conference, several architects reported to auditors that there is little to no communication between the Building Department and the constituency regarding potential improvements or understandings of the process. They said they are interested in improving the process and want to understand the issues, but that there is no communication with the Building Department that would allow them to facilitate efficiency and navigate through their challenges.

This assertion was corroborated by insiders at the Town: a Plan Examiner from the Building Department agreed that there seems to be a "wall" between the design professionals (architects and engineers) and the Building Department. They stated they try to approve plans as quickly as possible by taking measures such as calling the applicant and meeting the architect in person at the building site, but they do not believe other Plan Examiners do so.

There appears to be agreement between the Building Department and the local architects that it would be beneficial to meet periodically (weekly, monthly, etc.) via public forums. The goal would be for the Building Department to inform the public about its operations, and to hear their concerns about the Department and their suggestions for improvements.

Audit Findings

Finding 5

Procedures for Requests to Expedite Permit Applications Lack Standardization

There is no standard process to request an expedited permit application review and there is no option to do so in the MyToNH portal.

The Town Code provides for an “expedited” review of pending permit applications under very limited circumstances. These circumstances currently include but are not limited to:

- To accommodate an emergency.
- To avoid extreme financial hardship to the applicant.
- To facilitate access, safety, or independent living for people with disabilities.
- To address an urgent concern such as illness, disability or death in the family of an applicant.

Full descriptions and a general procedure for requesting an expedited permit application review can be found in Town Code § 2-10.1. See Appendix K.

In the past, the Town Code allowed for the Supervisor and/or Councilperson having jurisdiction over the affected premises to override the Building Department Commissioner’s decision regarding the request for an expedited permit application review. An amendment to this section of Town Code on August 4, 2022, by Local Law No. 12-2022, removed the Supervisor or Councilperson override option. Instead, all requests for expedited review of a permit application must be reviewed by both the Building Commissioner and Planning Commissioner. If the two Commissioners agree, the request to expedite is approved; if they do not agree, the request is denied.

An approved request to expedite a permit application allows the applicant “to skip the line” and become the next application reviewed by a Plan Examiner. It does not allow for the issuance of a permit or bypassing Plans Examination; the application still needs to conform to all Town Code and Building Codes and pass review.

There is no standardized process in place for applicants to request an expedited permit application review nor a standard channel for submitting a request for expedited review. Requests are currently accepted via various channels: hand delivery, mailed, email, or as a general document upload through MyToNH. Auditors found:

- There is no standard form for an applicant to request an expedited review.
- There is no option on MyToNH to submit a request for an expedited permit application review.
- There is no list of supporting documents required to substantiate the various conditions that might warrant an expedited review.
- The language about expedited reviews on the Building Department’s FAQ was outdated until November 2023 as it still referred to the option of a Councilperson override. Even after the November 2023 update, the language simply sites the relevant Town Code concerning expedite review requests without any additional guidance provided on how to submit such a request.

The lack of standardization in the format, contents, and delivery methods of requests to expedite contributes to inconsistency in the management and tracking of these requests.

Audit Findings

Finding 6

Reporting Functionality Not Fully Established for New Permitting Software

As a result of the Citizenserve reporting functionality not being fully implemented, the Building Department was unable to provide consistent, verifiable data on the time it takes to process permit applications or the number of applications pending and lacked data to monitor the inspection process.

Among the goals of this audit were to review, analyze, audit and report on the:

- Number of permit applications submitted per year.
- Number of permits issued per year.
- Timeliness of how long it takes to process a permit application.
- Number of permit applications missing information which required resubmission per year.
- Efficacy of the Building and Plumbing Inspection process.

Despite several discussions with the members of the IT Department and Building Department, auditors were not able to obtain consistent and reliable information for the above data points for the timeframe of 2019–2022. As such, an effective, accurate analysis comparing year-to-year numbers of applications processed, permits issued and the timeliness of each step could not be conducted.

Data prior to October 2021 was maintained in the Building Department’s prior permitting software, AMANDA. In October 2021, data from AMANDA was migrated into Citizenserve and the Building Department transitioned to using Citizenserve for processing applications.

- The Building Department provided auditors with monthly permit processing reports for January 2019–October 2021, which contained only permit data from the old AMANDA system.
- IT provided Auditors with data from Citizenserve for 2019–2022, which included permit processing information from both systems.

Auditors attempted to reconcile the two sources to verify the data agreed, but found discrepancies in the data for 2019 and 2020, causing the files to be deemed unreliable. Auditors were informed by IT that data from 2021 was a hybrid of both systems and was “a little wonky.” Review of data from 2022 also found inaccurate and inconsistent data. Additionally, the data provided for all years was insufficient to analyze the overall timeliness of the permitting process from a step-by-step perspective.

Discussions with the IT Department and Building Department revealed that the reporting function of Citizenserve was still being developed, despite Citizenserve being the only system in use by the Building Department to process permit applications for the past 26 months. IT informed auditors that Citizenserve was still a work in progress.

The Town’s agreement with Citizenserve includes the option for the system provider to create “an unlimited number of custom reports,” so it is not clear why this reporting function has been such a challenge to implement.

Audit Findings

Monthly Town Board Reports Were Not Generated Timely

In June 2022, the following provision was added to the Town Code:

“[T]he Building Commissioner shall submit monthly written reports to the Town Board summarizing all business conducted by the Department of Building, Safety Inspection and Enforcement, including applications received and reviewed, average application review time, permits and certificates issued, inspection reports, orders and notices issued, together with such other information as the Town Board, by resolution, may require.”

No monthly Town Board reports were generated from June 2022 through February 2023.

The Building Department Commissioner informed auditors that, as of April 2023, they were not included on any emails between IT and the Town Board regarding the creation of these reports. Despite the Town Law stating that the reports are to be submitted by the Building Department Commissioner, they were not asked to produce any of these reports, nor could they generate any of these reports as the report functionality of Citizenseve was still being developed.

According to the IT Commissioner, IT had been trying to create these types of reports since September 2022; however, the first monthly report submitted to the Town Board was not created until March 2023. Monthly reports have been created since then, but the contents and formatting were still being developed and modified to correct identified errors and improve organization.

Manual Reporting in the Building Department

The Secretary to the Building Department Commissioner manually created Weekly Status Reports. Prior to Citizenseve they looked through the Building Department’s various file cabinets (Residential, Commercial, etc.) to determine the date of the oldest application in the Plans Examination Division which had not yet been reviewed. Since the implementation of Citizenseve, the Secretary continues to generate the Weekly Reports, but looks up the information in the software instead of a file cabinet.

In addition, once Citizenseve was implemented, the Secretary was able to add metrics about applications in the Intake stage.

Auditors’ analysis of the Weekly Status Reports process revealed that the reports:

- Were manually created by one individual, with no backup to perform this function;
- Do not contain any quantification of the actual work product of the Building Department (i.e., how many applications were in process, reviewed to date or how many still need to be reviewed);
- Do not represent an aging schedule of the applications, the status of the applications or signify whether applications have been fully processed;
- Were being distributed to the Building Department staff without prior review by a supervisor.

The limited information presented on the Weekly Status Report was the only information that the Building Department was using to monitor their performance regarding the processing of applications. Auditors utilized the data from these reports to evaluate the Building Department’s success in meeting its internal standards for acceptable timeframes for processing applications.

Based on data from the Weekly Status Reports, the Building Department failed to meet the Department’s timeliness goals in 2019, 2020 and 2021, but saw significant improvement in 2022 (see chart on next page).

Audit Findings

Division	Internal Standard for Acceptable Processing Time	Success Rate			
		2019	2020	2021	2022
Intake	7–10 days	N/A	N/A	50%	92%
Plans Examination - Residential	3–6 weeks	10%	10%	6%	86%
Plans Examination - Commercial	3–6 weeks	0%	57%	24%	90%

N/A – Data Not Available

In order to analyze the Building Department’s performance auditors attempted to ascertain data from IT that would provide a simple snapshot, for any given day or point in time, of the number of permits open at the various stages of the process.

In June 2023, in response to auditor’s request, the IT Commissioner supplied a report which showed the number of open permit applications as of a given day at the Intake, Plans Examination, and Permit Pending stages in the process. This report, summarized to the right, showed the open permit applications as of May 31, 2023.

Open Permit Applications by Stage	
Stage	Number of Applications
Intake	250
Plans Examination	1,592
Permit Pending	420
TOTAL	2,262

A comparison of such data over time could be utilized to examine the Building Department’s performance and provide metrics to management on how to improve operations.

Inspections and Certificate Issuance Reporting Issues

The IT Commissioner reported that the Building Department only started focusing on reporting functionalities with respect to inspections in August 2023. Building Department reports to the Town Board in 2023, created by the Town’s IT Department, show only the total number of inspections each month and cumulative year-to-date. They do not provide any details as to how many inspections passed or failed, types of inspections performed or productivity of individual Inspectors. These limited reports limit management oversight of Inspectors’ activities.

Data that could be used to analyze inspection pass/fail rates by territory, Inspector, contractor and other operational processes is available in the Citizenserve system. From this data, auditors created several reports utilizing analytical software which the Town also has.

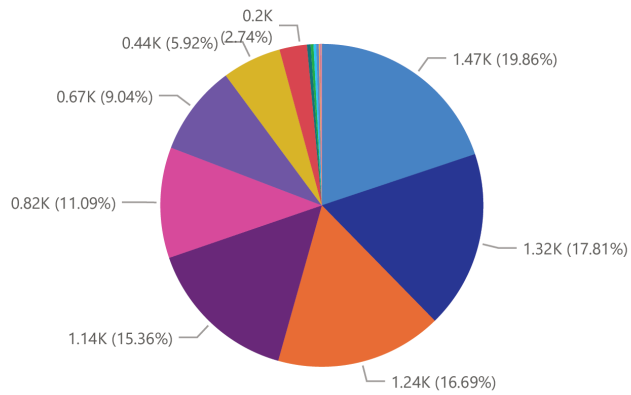
These reports were shown to the Building Department’s management who indicated that these are exactly the types of reports they are looking to have from Citizenserve. See examples on the next two pages.

Audit Findings

Permit Categories

- Select all
- Amendments
- Antenna Permits
- Building Permits
- Code Cases
- Existing Use Applications
- Historical Permits
- Public Assembly Registrations
- Rental Occupancy Permits
- Service Requests
- Sign Permits
- Site Visits
- Special Permits
- Storm Water Pollution/Prevent...
- Temporary Structure Permits
- Trade Permits
- Tree Removal Permits

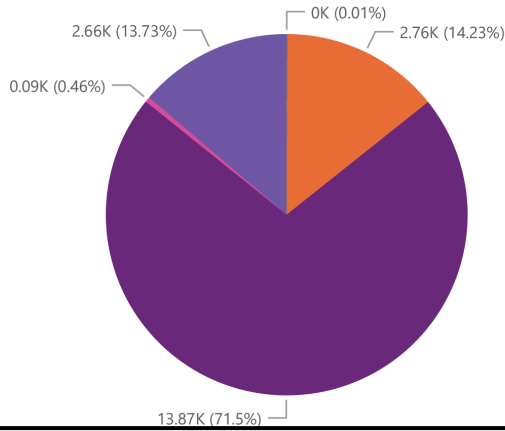
Inspectors



Inspector



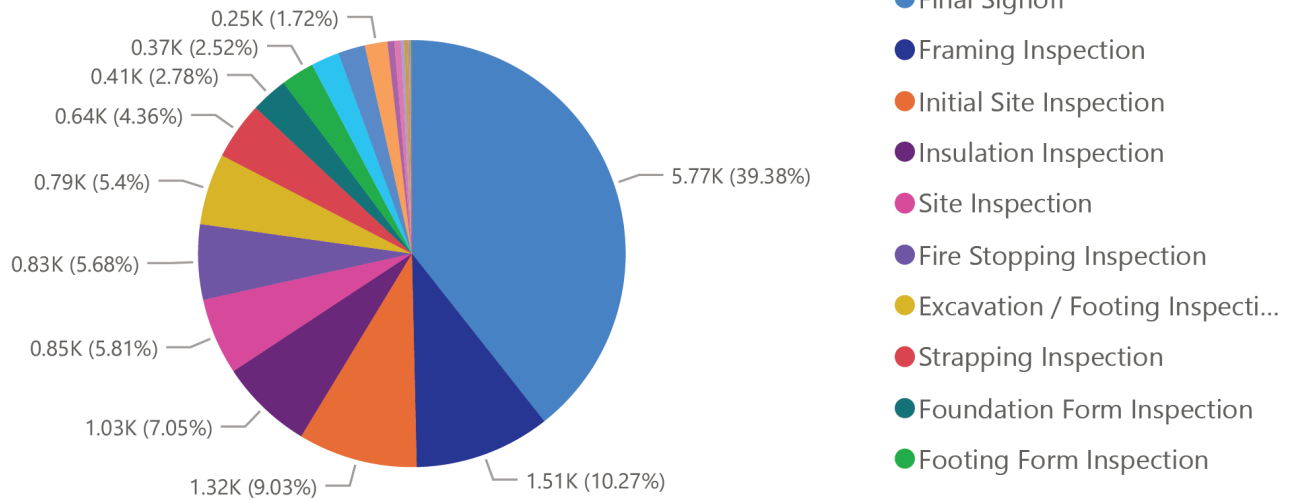
Permit Status



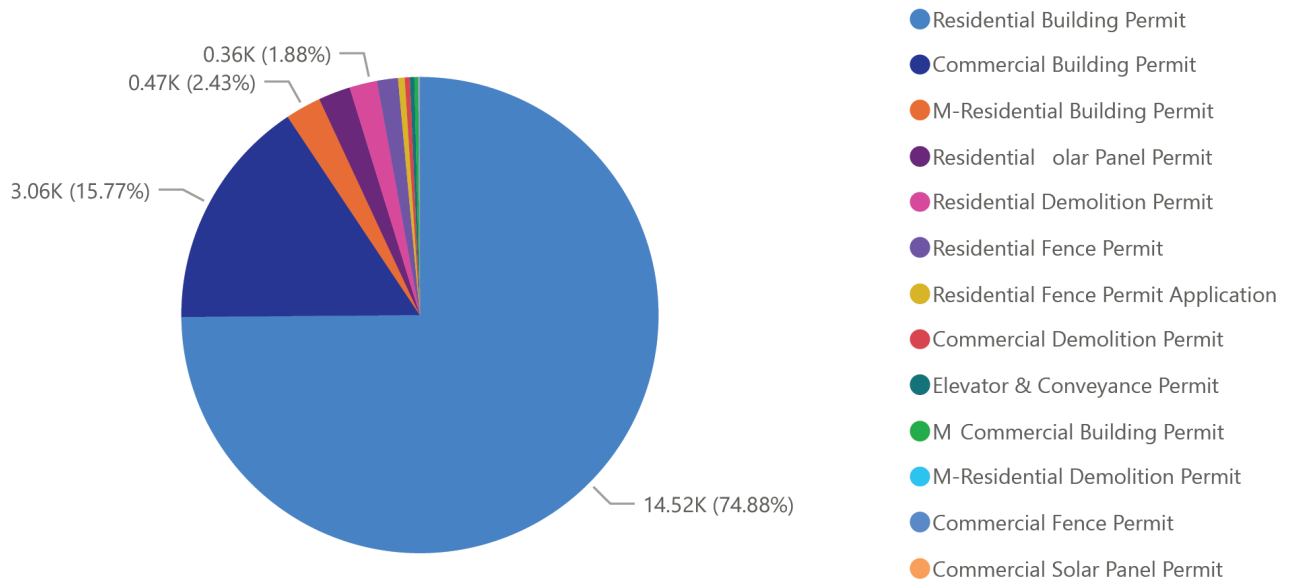
- Activity Complete
- Failed - NOV Issued
- Inspection Failed
- Inspection Passed
- No Show
- Partial Pass
- Passed
- Process Passed
- Site Visit - Completed

Audit Findings

Inspection Reason



Permit Categories



Audit Recommendations

The Town of North Hempstead Building Department should:

1) Leverage more capabilities of the Citizenserve Online Solutions software to enable constituents to view all data related to their property and track their permit applications within the MyToNH portal by:

- Restructuring Citizenserve to associate all permits within a project and remove the requirement of submitting the same supporting documentation multiple times;
- Organizing the permitting process by property instead of by permit;
- Utilizing funds approved by the Town Board in 2021 for scanning (see page 6) to have all historical property files scanned for upload to Citizenserve, making them readily available to applicants and staff;
- Continuing to improve the constituent facing interface of the MyToNH portal; and
- Improving work process flow screens in Citizenserve to capture the entire permitting process.

2) Implement permit processing operational improvements by:

- Fostering a constituent service-oriented culture within the Department, which focuses staff on meeting the needs of applicants and assisting applicants through the permitting process;
- Training Intake staff and putting processes in place to ensure all documents are adequately reviewed for accuracy and completeness prior to forwarding applications to Plans Examination;
- Standardizing procedures in the Plans Examination Division to develop consistency in the processing of permit applications, including documenting review notes in Citizenserve and standardizing Omission Letters;
- Requiring fee calculations to be documented within Citizenserve and implementing formal supervisory review of permits fee calculations;
- Standardizing procedures in the Inspection Division to develop consistency in the planning and execution of plumbing and building inspections, including a dedicated dispatcher or dispatching system for scheduling of inspections; and
- Address staffing and training issues in the Permit Pending and Back-End Review Divisions.

3) Improve communication with constituents by:

- Providing constituents the ability to access Building Department staff by phone, email, or in-person meetings throughout the permit process and/or through regularly scheduled public informational meetings;
- Utilizing Citizenserve's capability to provide automatic notifications to applicants of status changes concerning permit applications and to allow for communication between Building Department staff and applicants within the MyToNH portal; and
- Providing constituents with an online tutorial on the use of the MyToNH portal and improve FAQs.

Audit Recommendations

- 4) **Standardize the process to request an expedited permit application review, with the request and approval process being completed within the MyToNH portal.**

- 5) **Leverage Citizenserve and other software currently available to the Building Department to develop accurate and comprehensive reports which:**
 - Support analysis of metrics concerning the number of permit applications received, processed and issued, inspections scheduled and performed, certificates issued, as well as any other metrics deemed necessary by the Building Department;
 - Provide metrics concerning the time it took to process applications, from Intake to Plans Examination, to issuance of the permit(s); and
 - Meet the requirements for reporting to the Town Board as required by the Town Code.

Appendices

Appendix A – Detailing the Application Intake to Permit Issuance Process

The general process for acquiring a Building Permit consists of:

- a constituent submitting a permit application(s) and required supporting documentation to the Building Department;
- the documents being reviewed by the Building Department for accuracy, completeness, and compliance with the applicable sections of the Town and State Codes;
- the constituent addressing any issues identified during the Building Department’s reviews; and
- the constituent paying the applicable fees and ultimately being issued a permit(s) by the Building Department.

Permits for larger projects are processed on a project basis and can be viewed as having a parent-child relationship, where the Building Permit is considered the “parent” and the other associated permits such as Plumbing, Gas, HVAC, etc. would be considered the “child”. Each “child” permit requires a separate individual application. Any issue(s) with an individual child permit needs to be resolved before the project can proceed through the process.

Smaller stand-alone projects such as Electrical Equipment (e.g., emergency back-up power units, electric car charging stations and similar electrical equipment), Plumbing, Fences, Solar Panels, Tree Removal, etc. which are unrelated to the Building Permit project, are also processed on an individual basis.

Application Intake

As of October 2021, Permit applications and the associated supporting documentation are submitted electronically to the Building Department through the MyToNH portal. Previously all documentation was processed manually with documents being submitted as hard-copy paper records.

Clerks within the Intake Division are responsible for reviewing applications for completeness and ensuring all required documentation for the particular permit application have been submitted. If the Intake Clerk finds any items are missing, they will send a “Missing Items” email through MyToNH to the constituent to notify them that additional documentation must be submitted to continue the Intake review process.

Constituents have 120 days to address the issues noted in their Missing Items email before their application becomes expired. If the application expires and they wish to move forward with the application in the future, they can either: (1) file a Permit Application Renewal Request (PAR), or (2) file a new application at which time the previously expired application will be voided as being superseded.

Once all Missing Items have been addressed, and the application is deemed complete by the Intake Clerk it will be submitted to the Plans Examination Division for Code compliance review.

Plans Examination

The Plans Examination process encompasses four steps:

1. Initial Document Review

First, a Plan Examiner will review the documents received from the Intake Division to verify that all the necessary documents were sufficiently submitted (e.g., correct property, correct and legible documents, etc.).

2. Historical Review

Next, the Plan Examiner will review the property’s building files to verify if everything on the property is lawful (i.e., has been constructed with a permit). The Plan Examiner will obtain the historical file for the property from the Building Department’s Records Room and compare what the Town has on file against the information that the applicant has provided to see if any discrepancies exist to signify that work has been performed without a permit. For example, if the Town’s files show that the property is a one-family home, and the applicant’s files show that the house is a two-family home, the inconsistency would indicate that work has been performed without the Town’s knowledge.

The results of issues identified during the historical review are handled in two different ways.

- i. Unpermitted work that is directly related to the new permit application which poses a potential impact to life/safety would need to be addressed before the new application can move forward. The applicant would need to file a Maintain permit application, which upon review and if approved would legalize the unpermitted work and allow the new construction to proceed.
 - o For example, an application is filed for a second story addition, but the addition is being built on top of an area of the first floor which the Building Department has no prior documentation.
 - ii. Unpermitted work that is not directly related to the new permit application and does not pose a potential impact to life/safety would not delay the issuance of the new permit. Instead, a Notice of Violation is issued and placed on the property until compliance is demonstrated. Compliance can be obtained by either providing a valid certificate of completion from the Town of North Hempstead or applying and obtaining a Maintain permit. Violations not disposed of may show up on a Title search and may delay a refinance or sale of the property.
3. Town Zoning Code Review

After Historical Review, the application will undergo a Town of North Hempstead Zoning Code Review. The Town Zoning Code generally covers such items as permitted uses, setbacks, maximum sizes, heights, parking requirements, etc. for different premises within the unincorporated areas of the Town. The Plan Examiner will review the application and

Appendix A – Detailing the Application Intake to Permit Issuance Process

supporting documents to determine if what the constituent is proposing is in compliance with the Town Zoning Code.

It is important that permit applications and supporting documentation are precise and contain the appropriate amount of detail so that a Plan Examiner can determine precisely how much the plans are in, or out of, compliance with the Town Zoning Code. The Plan Examiner will send the applicant an Omission Letter if the application is missing certain information, or further clarification is needed. Constituents have 120 days to address the issues noted in their Omission Letter before their application becomes expired. (Similar to Missing Items emails, the applicant may either file a PAR or a new application if they wish to move forward with the application in the future).

A Notice of Disapproval will be issued if the application is ultimately found to be contrary to the Town Zoning Code. At this point, the applicant has two options on how to proceed:

- i. Revise their plans so they conform to the Town’s Zoning Code and resubmit their application; or
- ii. File for a variance with the Town’s Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). After a public hearing and BZA review, the BZA may grant a variance which allows the applicant to legalize items which are not in compliance with the Town Zoning Code.

Once the Plan Examiner determines that an application is compliant with the Town Zoning Code, or a variance has been issued to legalize certain items in the application, the Plan Examiner can proceed to review the application for compliance with the NYS Uniform Building Code and Energy Code.

Plan Examiners generally do not proceed to NYS Uniform Building Code Review until after an application has passed Town Zoning Code Review. If the plans do not pass Town Zoning Code Review, the plans may need to be altered. The applicant may revise their plans or the BZA can issue partial variances, which may result in part of the plans being altered and some left unchanged. For these reasons, Plan Examiners will typically wait until Town Zoning Code Review is approved before proceeding to NYS Uniform Building Code Review.

4. NYS Uniform Building Code Review

After passing Town Zoning Code Review, Plan Examiners will verify the application/plans are “substantially” in compliance with the NYS Uniform Building Code and Energy Code.

Some of the items verified during the NYS Uniform Building Code Review include occupant load (i.e., number of people allowed in a building), means of egress, fire safety, number of plumbing fixtures, mechanical requirements, accessibility (for commercial projects), general construction, Energy Code compliance, etc. Electrical Underwriters certificates must be provided by outside electrical agencies. These reviews are not performed by Plan Examiners.

Similar to Town Zoning Code Review, an Omission Letter will be sent if the application is missing certain information, or further clarification is needed. Constituents have 120

Appendix A – Detailing the Application Intake to Permit Issuance Process

days to address the issues noted in their Omission Letter before their application becomes expired. (Similar to Missing Items emails, the applicant may either file a PAR or a new application if they wish to move forward with the application in the future). Also, similar to the Town Zoning Code Review, if the plans are found to be not in compliance with the NYS Uniform Building Code and/or Energy Code, the applicant will need to either amend the plans so they comply or file for a variance with New York State. However, filing for variances with NYS are less common than Town Zoning Code variances as the process is more onerous.

Eventually, after the applicant submits all the required documents or a variance is received, a set of plans that are substantially compliant with the NYS Uniform Building Code will exist and the Plan Examiner can approve the plans. Plan Examiners will mark up the plans with an approval stamp to indicate that the plans are acceptable and in compliance. The Plan Examiner will then calculate the final permit fees based on specifications of the approved plans and submit the application to “Permit Pending”.

Permit Pending/Permit Issuance

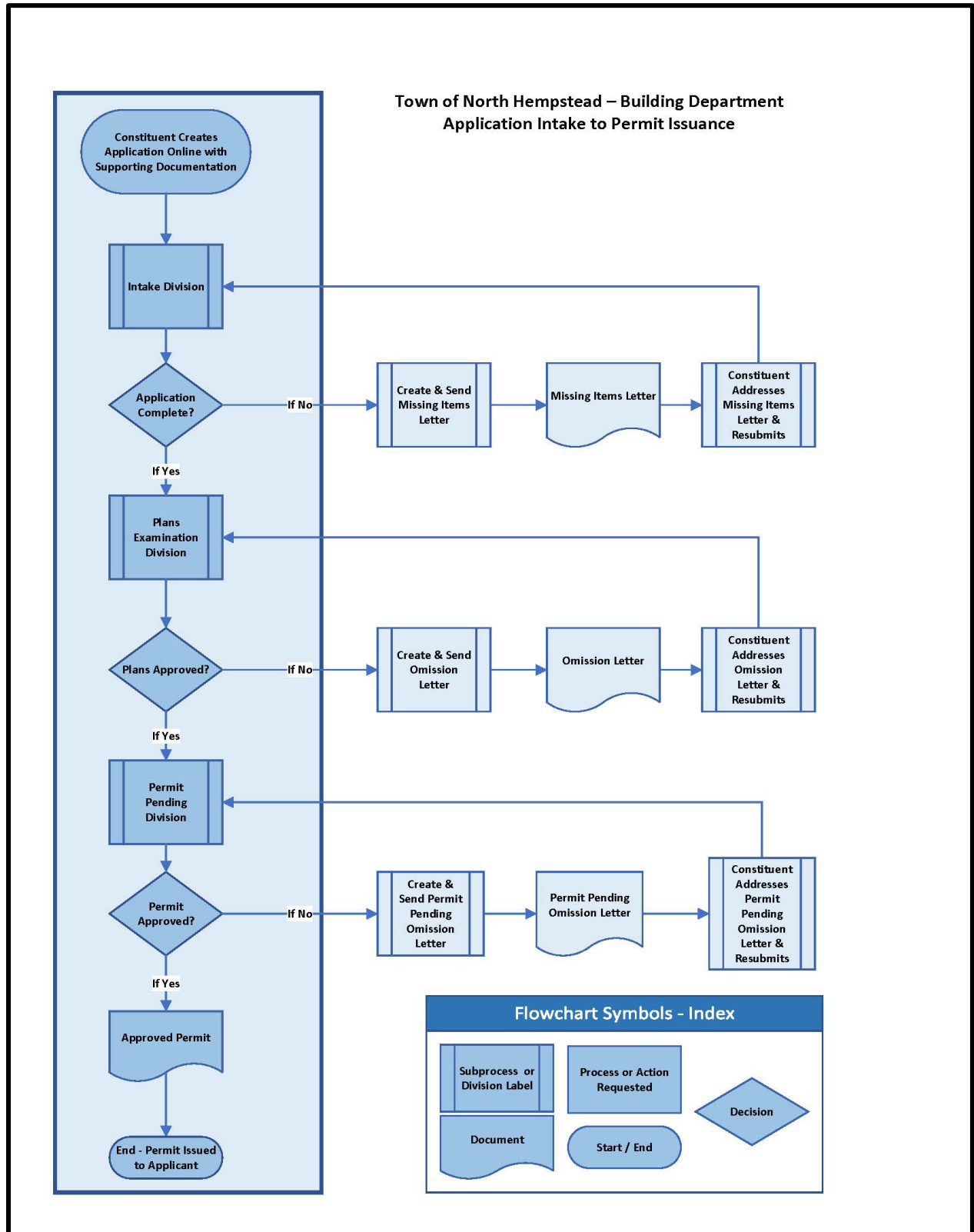
After an application has passed the Plans Examination Division’s review, it will enter “Permit Pending.” The application is sent back to the Intake Division, where a specific employee will perform a review to verify that all documents have been completed, all insurances and contractor licenses are up-to-date, and the final permit fees have been paid.

Electrician and Plumber licenses are checked against the Town’s records to ensure they are licensed to do work in the Town. Contractor licenses are verified by searching the Nassau County Department of Consumer Affairs’ website, and proof of permit fee payment is verified within MyToNH. Any issues found during the review of these items will result in the applicant being sent a “Permit Pending Omission Letter” which also has a 120-day expiration timeframe.

A permit can be issued once all items from the Permit Pending Omission Letter have been cleared. The applicant will be sent a permit issuance email along with a digital copy of their permit. For new permits, a hard copy of the permit will be printed on red paper stock (Red Permit Card) for the applicant to pick up or have sent via mail. (A Red Permit Card will not be given out for Maintain permits as there is no ongoing construction where it would need to be on display.) The Red Permit Card is the only document that the Building Department physically gives out, all else is now digital.

Appendix A – Detailing the Application Intake to Permit Issuance Process

Flowchart of the Application Intake to Permit Issuance Process



Types of Applications, Permits, Certificates and Licenses

Antenna Location Permit - An Antenna Location Permit is required to install or maintain new Wireless Telecommunications Facilities for each specific carrier at a site, including Small Cell Facilities.

Antenna Modification Permit - An Antenna Modification Permit is required to upgrade or modify an existing telecommunication facility for a specific wireless carrier.

Application for Amended Building Permit – This application is filed to amend an existing active residential or commercial Building Permit, Fence Permit, Electrical Equipment Permit, Solar Panel Permit, Elevator & Conveyance Permit or Tree Removal Permit.

Application for Amended Plumbing Permit – This application is filed to amend an existing active residential or commercial Plumbing Permit, Gas Permit, Oil Permit, HVAC/Mechanical Permit, Infrastructure Permit, Drainage Permit or Fire Sprinkler Permit.

Building Permit – This application is used to file for the construction, improvement or alteration to any building, structure, or property other than those that are filed under specific applications. Building Permits are filed for new dwelling, new commercial building, new accessory structures, change of use of a building or property, swimming pools, sheds, detached garages, interior alterations to an existing building, etc.

Covid-19 Outdoor Accommodation – Covid Applications were filed by commercial establishments for temporary outdoor seating or temporary outdoor use of a premises during Covid-19 lockdowns. The parking requirements of the Town Zoning Code were waived during the time these Temporary Outdoor Accommodations were in place.

Demolition Permit – A Demolition permit is required for the demolition of a building or structure or part thereof.

Drainage Permit – A Drainage permit is required for the installation of a new, modification or removal of an on-site drainage system.

Electrical Equipment Permit – An Electrical Equipment permit is required for the installation of new, modification of an existing or removal of Electrical Equipment Systems such as emergency back-up power units, electric car charging stations and similar electrical equipment.

Elevator & Conveyance Permit – Elevators and other Conveying Systems intended for the movement of people and materials require a permit, herein after referenced as an ‘Elevator & Conveyance Permit’. This includes but is not limited to the installation of: Elevators, Escalators, Moving Walks, Dumbwaiters, Materials Lifts, Platform & Wheelchair Lifts, Stairway Chairlifts, Conveyors (Belt, Chain, Live Roller, Bucket, Vertical Reciprocating, etc.), Belt Manlifts, Industrial Scissor Lifts, and Automotive Lifts.

Fence Permit – A fence permit is required for the installation, replacement, or removal of any and all fencing on properties within the unincorporated areas of the Town of North Hempstead.

Fire Sprinkler Permit – A Sprinkler permit is required for the installation of a new, modification of an existing or removal of a Fire Sprinkler system.

Floodplain Development Permit – A separate Floodplain Development Application is required for all construction that will occur within a designated flood plain as shown on FEMA Flood Zone Maps.

Appendix B – Definitions: Types of Applications, Permits, Certificates and Licenses

Gas Permit – A Gas permit is required for the installation, modification or removal of existing gas appliances, gas-fired water heaters, gas-fired burners, gas-fired generators, liquefied petroleum gas (propane, butane, etc.) storage tanks, and/or gas piping.

HVAC/Mechanical Permit – An HVAC/Mechanical permit is required for the installation of a new or modification of an existing HVAC/Mechanical unit and/or ductwork; Commercial Kitchen Hoods and Geothermal Heating and/or Cooling Units.

Infrastructure Permit – An Infrastructure permit is required for the installation of a new or modification of an existing sewer/septic line or main water service line.

Multiple Residence License - Per §8-5 of the Town of North Hempstead Code a Multiple Residence License is required to conduct, maintain or operate a multiple residence (defined as a building containing three or more dwelling units; a building with one or more sleeping rooms, other than a one- or two-family dwelling) or allow a building, structure or part thereof to be used as a multiple residence.

Oil Permit – An Oil permit is required for the installation of a new, modification of an existing or removal of an oil-fired burner, oil-fired water heater, oil-fired generators, and/or fuel oil (home heating oil, diesel, kerosene) storage tanks.

Plumbing Permit – A plumbing permit is required for the installation of new/replacement plumbing fixtures or plumbing system alterations/extensions.

Public Assembly License - Per §9-5 of the Town of North Hempstead Code a Public Assembly License is required to conduct, maintain, or operate a place of assembly or allow, let or permit property, a building or part thereof to be used as or for a place of public assembly.

Rental Occupancy Permit - Per §2-103 of the Town of North Hempstead Code a Rental Occupancy Permit is required for all one and two-family homes, condos, townhouses, apartment complexes, multiple residencies and mixed-use occupancy buildings which are rented out.

Sign Permit - A Sign Permit is required for the installation, placement, displaying, alteration, maintaining and/or repair of any illuminated and/or non-illuminated billboards, wall signs, ground signs, tower signs, hanging/blade, gasoline station signs, billboards, marquees, or awnings on a property.

Solar Panel Permit - A Solar Panel permit is required for the installation of a new, modification of an existing or removal of a Solar Panel system.

Storm Water Pollution Prevention Permit – A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Permit Application must be filed whenever more than one acre of land will be disturbed during construction. This is a NYSDEC requirement.

Subdivision Permit - The subdivision or reappropriation of any tax lot(s) must be filed with the Nassau County Planning Commission. A requirement of this application is to provide a letter of Zoning Compliance from the authority having jurisdiction over the zoning requirements of the area in which the parcel is located. In the unincorporated areas within the Town of North Hempstead, the Town of North Hempstead Building Department has jurisdiction. In order to be issued a letter of zoning compliance, a Subdivision Application must be filed with the Building Department in order for the proposed subdivision to be reviewed for compliance with all applicable regulations of the Town of North Hempstead Zoning Code.

Appendix B – Definitions: Types of Applications, Permits, Certificates and Licenses

Temporary Building Permit - A Temporary Building permit is required for the placement of a habitable or non-habitable manufactured structure on a private property. This could include but is not limited to storage pods, cassone storage units, temporary office trailers during construction, temporary mobile homes, scaffolding, etc.

Temporary Tent Permit - A Temporary Tent permit is required for the use of Temporary Tent and Canopy structures.

Tree Removal Permit - Tree removal permits are required for trees in the front yard of your home with a diameter of 6 inches as measured at a height of 4½ feet above the base of the trunk. Properties on a corner lot are considered to have 2 front yards. A tree removal permit is not needed for other trees on your property unless such tree removals are in conjunction with or within 6 months of any building permit. In such cases a tree removal permit is needed, regardless of the location of the tree on your property.

Other Applications that are Administrative in Nature

Archival Certificate Application – This request is filed when a permit that was issued prior to 1996 was signed off by an Inspector but no certificate to close out the project was issued. The reason that these certificates were not issued is that prior to 1996 the applicant had to file an Application for Certificate at the end of the project and pay the Certificate Fee to obtain the Certificate. After 1996 the policy was changed to collect the Certificate Fee upfront so that when the project was signed off by an Inspector the certificate to close out the project could be issued with no further application or fee required.

Average Front Yard Setback Search Request – Filed by applicants to request copies of survey of properties that abut their property to provide setback information to establish average front yard setback as required by Town Zoning Code.

Change of Address Application – This application is filed if a property owner wishes to change the current address of their property or have street addresses assigned to new parcels that were created via subdivision.

Change of Contractor – This is filed when a constituent wishes to change one of the contractors that they hired after a permit has been issued. This is required so that the licenses and insurances of the new contractor can be verified.

FOIL Request – Any request for a document held by the Building Department is filed as a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL Request) by clicking on Request a Building Record on the Town Portal.

Permit Application Renewal – This request is filed when an application has become dormant due to inactivity on the part of the applicant and the application has become expired. The applicant is required to respond to a Missing Items Email, Plan Examiners' Omission Letter and/or Permit Pending Letter within 120 days from the date of the email that is sent by the Building Department. If the applicant does not respond within the requisite 120 days, the application expires. If the applicant later decides to move forward with the application, they file a Permit Application Renewal on the Portal and after paying a new initial filing fee the application is reactivated and the application process can continue.

Appendix B – Definitions: Types of Applications, Permits, Certificates and Licenses

Permit Renewal Request – This request is filed when a permit that has been issued has been allowed to expire. All Building, Plumbing, Gas, Oil, Drainage, Infrastructure, Fire Sprinkler, Demolition, Fence, Solar Panel, HVAC/Mechanical, Electrical Equipment Permits are good for two years. If the applicant takes longer than two years to complete the project or fails to call for the required final inspection to close out a project within two years, the permit expires and must be renewed by the payment of the renewal fee.

Refund Request – Filed on Town Portal when a constituent is requesting a refund for an application that was filed incorrectly.

Title Search Requests – Filed by Title Search Companies to request access to file for Title Reporting purposes.

Types of Certificates Issued by the Town of North Hempstead Building Department

Certificate of Approval (CA) – A CA is issued for what are referred to as Trade Permits which include: Plumbing Permits, Gas Permits, Oil Permits, Drainage Permits, HVAC and Mechanical Permits, Infrastructure Permits – Sewage, Infrastructure Permits – Main Water, and Fire Sprinkler Permits, and Electrical Equipment Permits.

Certificate of Completion (CC) – A CC is issued for all construction permits such as additions and alterations to existing buildings which does not change the occupancy type, the construction of accessory structures such as swimming pools, detached garages, decks, driveways, patios, retaining walls, fences, solar panels, demolition of buildings or structures, etc. A CC would also be issued for a new commercial building in which the new tenant or occupant has not been determined. Once a tenant has been found a new Commercial Building Permit Application is required which would ultimately result in the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for that new tenant.

Certificate of Existing Use – Certificates of Existing Use are issued for structures for which there are no records at the Town of North Hempstead. If it is determined that the structure has been altered subsequent to 1929, evidence shall be provided that the additional work has received a Certificate of Completion before the Building Commissioner may consider whether a Certificate of Existing Use is applicable.

Certificate of Occupancy (CO) – states the legal use and/or type of permitted occupancy for a building. A CO would be issued for any new building that has been constructed and will be occupied. Examples include new one-and-two family dwellings, townhouses, and multiple dwellings. It would also include commercial buildings in which the tenant occupancy is part of the scope of work for the permit. A CO would be issued if the use of an existing building is changed and could include alterations and/or additions to the existing building. For example, an existing single-family dwelling is converted into a two-family dwelling. A CO is also required when a new tenant occupies a vacant tenant space in an existing commercial building.

Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) – A TCO may be issued to allow the temporary occupancy of a building or structure, or a portion thereof, prior to completion of the work which is the subject of a building permit. A TCO may be issued for a period not exceeding three months from its date of issuance and shall be void thereafter, except that for good cause the Building Commissioner may allow a maximum of two extensions for periods not exceeding three months each.

Appendix B – Definitions: Types of Applications, Permits, Certificates and Licenses

Professional Licenses Issued by the Town of North Hempstead

Professional License Applications are filed on the Town Portal by clicking on Apply for a Professional License:

- Contractor Licenses
 - Fence Erector
 - Sign Erector

- Plumbing Licenses
 - Master Plumber
 - Reciprocal Plumber
 - Tri-Town Plumber

- Electrical Licenses
 - Master Electrician
 - Reciprocal Electrician
 - Electrical Inspection Agency

Appendix C – Detailing the Inspection to Certificate Issuance Process

The general process for closing a Building permit consists of:

- The constituent (or their contractor, plumber, etc.) contacting their assigned Building and/or Plumbing Inspector to schedule an inspection(s) for a particular permit.
- The Building and/or Plumbing Inspector performing all necessary inspections and signing off on a final inspection to substantiate that the work which has taken place conforms with the specifications of the approved permit.
- An individual who was not previously involved with the permit performing a Back-End Review to verify that all permits associated with a project have passed their final inspections and all necessary supporting documentation has been received and complies with the specifications of the approved permit.
- The creation and issuance of an applicable certificate by the Building Commissioner (or their designee) certifying that the work for which the permit was issued has been completed substantially in accordance with the permit and applicable laws.
- Closing the permit file after the applicable certificate has been issued.

In addition to the above, permit amendments may also be filed to address minor changes, alterations, improvements or modifications to the work within an approved permit. Similar to the original permit they are revising, amendments also need to pass review for accuracy, completeness, and compliance with the applicable sections of the Town and State Codes.

Inspections

After receipt of the permit, the applicant may contact their assigned Building Department Inspector to schedule an inspection to begin construction. Inspections are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis.

Per Town Code § 2-11, “a building permit shall be effective to authorize the commencing of work in accordance with the application, plans and specifications on which it is based for a period of three months after the date of its issuance. If work is not commenced within such period of three months, the project shall be deemed abandoned. For good cause, the Building Commissioner may allow reasonable extensions at his discretion. Any project which is not completed within two years from the date of issuance of a building permit shall be deemed abandoned unless good reason for delay is shown.” Abandoned Building Permits will need to be renewed and a possible fee will be required at the discretion of the Department.

The Building Department’s Inspection Division is split into two sub-divisions: Building and Plumbing.

1. Building Inspectors perform inspections for building related items such as: Demolition, Excavation, Foundation Form, Framing, Insulation, Strapping, etc.
2. Plumbing Inspectors perform inspections for plumbing related items such as: Boilers, Furnaces, Hot Water Heaters, HVAC, Septic Systems, Sewers, Water, etc.

The type of inspections required for each permit will vary depending on the scope of work for the permit (i.e., smaller projects may require less types of inspections). The number of inspections

Appendix C – Detailing the Inspection to Certificate Issuance Process

needed is determined by the quality of the work; work that is found to be noncompliant with the required Codes will fail and result in more inspections.

Maintain permits may only require a final inspection to be performed as some aspects of the construction are no longer capable of being physically observed. In these instances, the Building and/or Plumbing Inspector would have to obtain and rely on an Architect's Certification for those aspects of the inspection as they can't be physically viewed by the Inspector.

New construction would typically require the following building inspections to be performed (in order).

- Initial Site Inspection (before any work can start)
- Demolition Initial (if applicable)
- Excavation / Footing Inspection
- Drywell Inspection (if applicable)
- Foundation Form Inspection
- Waterproofing Inspection
- Strapping Inspection (*Note: This is to be done before roofing and siding*)

All Electrical, Plumbing and HVAC Roughing Inspections (i.e., Trade Inspections, which are performed by the Plumbing Inspectors)

- Framing Inspection
- Fire Stopping Inspection (*Note: This can be done with framing or as a stand-alone inspection*)
- Insulation Inspection (*Note: Once passed, the contractor will be given the OK to sheetrock, which does not require an inspection*)
- Final Inspection

Plumbing inspections are dependent on the scope of the individual permit and typically take place in three parts.

- Underground Rough (*Performed for underground plumbing work, before a cement floor is poured and the pipes are still exposed.*)
- Aboveground Rough (*Performed for aboveground plumbing work, while the pipes are in the walls/ceilings before the walls are sheet rocked and closed up.*)
- Final Inspections

In addition to the above, Plumbing Inspectors may also be required to witness certain tests being performed by Town of North Hempstead Licensed Plumbers to verify work complies with the various requirements of the New York State Code. Such tests may include gas pressure tests, building sewer tests, drain, waste and vent system tests, shower liner tests, and water supply system tests. Furthermore, HVAC duct pressure tests and electrical inspections are performed by third party inspectors, in which case the applicable inspection reports must be submitted to the Plumbing Inspector.

Appendix C – Detailing the Inspection to Certificate Issuance Process

Inspections are marked as either pass or fail. Failed inspections would require additional re-inspections until they are passed to verify that work has been made compliant with the required Codes. (Note: During the scope of this audit, “partial pass” was also used to indicate that certain aspects of an inspection passed and others failed. Further follow up inspections would be required but the work would be allowed to proceed. The Building Department discontinued the use of “partial pass” in early 2023.)

Inspection Reports containing the results of each inspection are emailed to the homeowner and contractor/plumber after an inspection is completed. After a final inspection has been approved, the permit may proceed to Back-End Review.

Other Inspections (Enforcement responsibilities)

In addition to the above, the Building Department’s Inspection Division also performs other inspections related to the enforcement of the State and Town Codes including Rental / Illegal Housing, Multiple Dwellings, Public Assembly, Telecommunications, and Complaint Investigations which may result in Violations. These topics were not covered under the scope of this audit.

Permit Amendments

The Town Code addresses permit amendments (amendments) in § 2-9 L. Amendments are filed to deal with minor changes, alterations, improvements or modifications to the work that was already approved by the original permit. Substantive changes, modifications, alterations or improvements to the original permit, or changes outside the scope of the original permit, would require the filing of a new permit application for such work, along with the appropriate fees and supporting documentation.

Amendments can arise from two different scenarios:

1. An applicant may file an amendment application proactively, before any construction takes place to address minor changes, alterations, improvements or modifications to the original permit.
2. During field inspections, the Building and/or Plumbing Inspector(s) may identify instances where what was actually constructed does not agree with the specifications of the approved permit. If so, the Inspector will instruct the architect/contractor to submit a permit amendment application to address the noted differences from the original approved plans. In these instances, the amendment will be classified as a “maintain”, as the work has already begun and/or been completed without the required permit amendment application being issued, which results in double the permit fees.

There are four different types of amendments which can be filed:

1. Amendment Residential Building (ARB)
2. Amendment Commercial Building (ACB)
3. Amendment Residential Trade (ART)
4. Amendment Commercial Trade (ACT)

Appendix C – Detailing the Inspection to Certificate Issuance Process

As seen in the chart below, building amendments have 5 different sub-types and trade amendments have 8 different sub-types. A separate amendment must be completed for each different sub-type being amended.

Town of North Hempstead Building Department Permit Amendment Sub-Types	
Building	Trade
1. Building Permit Amendment	1. Plumbing Fixture Permit Amendment
2. Fence Permit Amendment	2. Gas Permit Amendment
3. Solar Panel Permit Amendment	3. HVAC/Mechanical Permit Amendment
4. Demolition Permit Amendment	4. Drainage Permit Amendment
5. Tree Permit Amendment	5. Infrastructure Permit Amendment
	6. Electrical Equipment Permit Amendment
	7. Oil Permit Amendment
	8. Fire Sprinkler Amendment

Once an amendment is submitted through Citizenserve, it will be routed directly to the Building Department's Deputy Commissioner for an initial review to determine if the amendment is valid and what the fee should be.

To do this he verifies that the amendment is being filed against an existing permit, and that the amendment is for the same scope of work that the original permit was for (it cannot expand upon the scope of work). For example, if an amendment is filed in relation to a permit for a kitchen remodel, the amendment cannot be for the addition of two bathrooms somewhere else in the house, it needs to be directly related to the kitchen remodel. To determine the fees, the Deputy Commissioner will review the application to determine if the amendment is related to work which has not yet stated, or for work which has already begun or been completed. He will then calculate the fee and assign the amendment application to a specific employee in the Building Department's Intake Division for Intake Review.

The Clerk-Laborer from the Intake Division will review the permit amendment application for completeness. She verifies that the amended plans are signed and stamped/sealed by the design professional, all necessary supporting documentation was received, the permit that is being amended is not expired, and that the fees for the amendment have been paid. If any issues arise during her review, a Missing Items email will be generated and sent to the homeowner, applicant, or anyone else relevant to the project, to obtain the missing information or address any noted issues.

Unlike other plan reviews, amendments differ as they bypass the Plan Examination Review step and simply go from Intake to the Building/Plumbing Inspector for Plan Review. Consequently, after Intake Review is completed, the amendment will be assigned to either a Building or Plumbing Inspector for their review and approval (usually the Inspector who dealt with the original permit which is being amended).

The Building or Plumbing Inspector will review the amendment documents to verify they are in compliance with the Building and Zoning Codes. Inspector review is usually performed for minor changes from the plans which were identified during field inspections, such as minor relocations of windows or doors within the original scope of work.

Appendix C – Detailing the Inspection to Certificate Issuance Process

Alternatively, if the amendment appears to have a significant impact on zoning, structural, or other substantial Code issues, the Inspectors may reassign the amendment Plan Review to the Plan Examiner who reviewed the original permit affected by the amendment (as they generally are more familiar with the Codes). Assigning this to the original Plan Examiner will also provide continuity of the project and not change the perspective of the project with a new pair of eyes from a different Plan Examiner.

If all is found to be in compliance, the amendment will be approved, the Inspector (or Plan Examiner) will stamp the plans with their approval and the amendment will be closed. If any instances of noncompliance are found or additional information is needed, then an Omissions Letter will be emailed to the constituent to address the situation.

Back-End Review and Certificate Issuance

After a permit has passed its Final Inspection, the entire property file will undergo a review by a Building Department employee who was not previously involved with the permit. The reviewer will analyze the entire property file associated with the permit to determine if the permit is a stand-alone permit or if it is a child/parent permit to a larger project. If it's a child/parent permit to a larger project, the review will not continue until all permits within the project have passed their final inspections. The reviewer will also review the entire property file associated with the permit to determine if there are any outstanding Notice of Violations (NOVs) against the property, and if so, will proceed with attempting to close out the NOV; however, Back-End Review may proceed even if there is an NOV against the property.

This Back-End Review will include a detailed review of the entire project file to verify that the: approved plans, scope of work, inspection reports, final survey, Electrical Inspection Certificate (if required), and any other required supporting documents (such as various Nassau County Fire Marshal's certificates, an Architect's Certification Letter, etc.) all agree with one another and comply with the specifications of the approved permit.

While reviewing the supporting documentation, if any documentation is found to be missing during the Back-End Review, the reviewer will send the file back to the Inspector(s) to obtain any outstanding documentation. If any of the supporting documentation is found to not comply with the specifications of the approved permit, then corrective action must be taken to bring the project into compliance with the approved permit.

For example, if less fixtures were installed than what was indicated on the approved plans, or if the scope of work was reduced, then the scope of work for the entire permit would need to be adjusted to match what actually took place so the certificate does not include work which was not actually performed. If more fixtures were installed than what was approved, an amendment would need to be filed. Any items involving work found to be performed outside of the scope of work for the approved permit would need to be addressed by filing a new permit. For example, if the approved permit is for a kitchen remodel, but during inspections and Back-End Review the addition of two bathrooms somewhere else in the house were noted, then a separate permit would be required for that scope of work.

Appendix C – Detailing the Inspection to Certificate Issuance Process

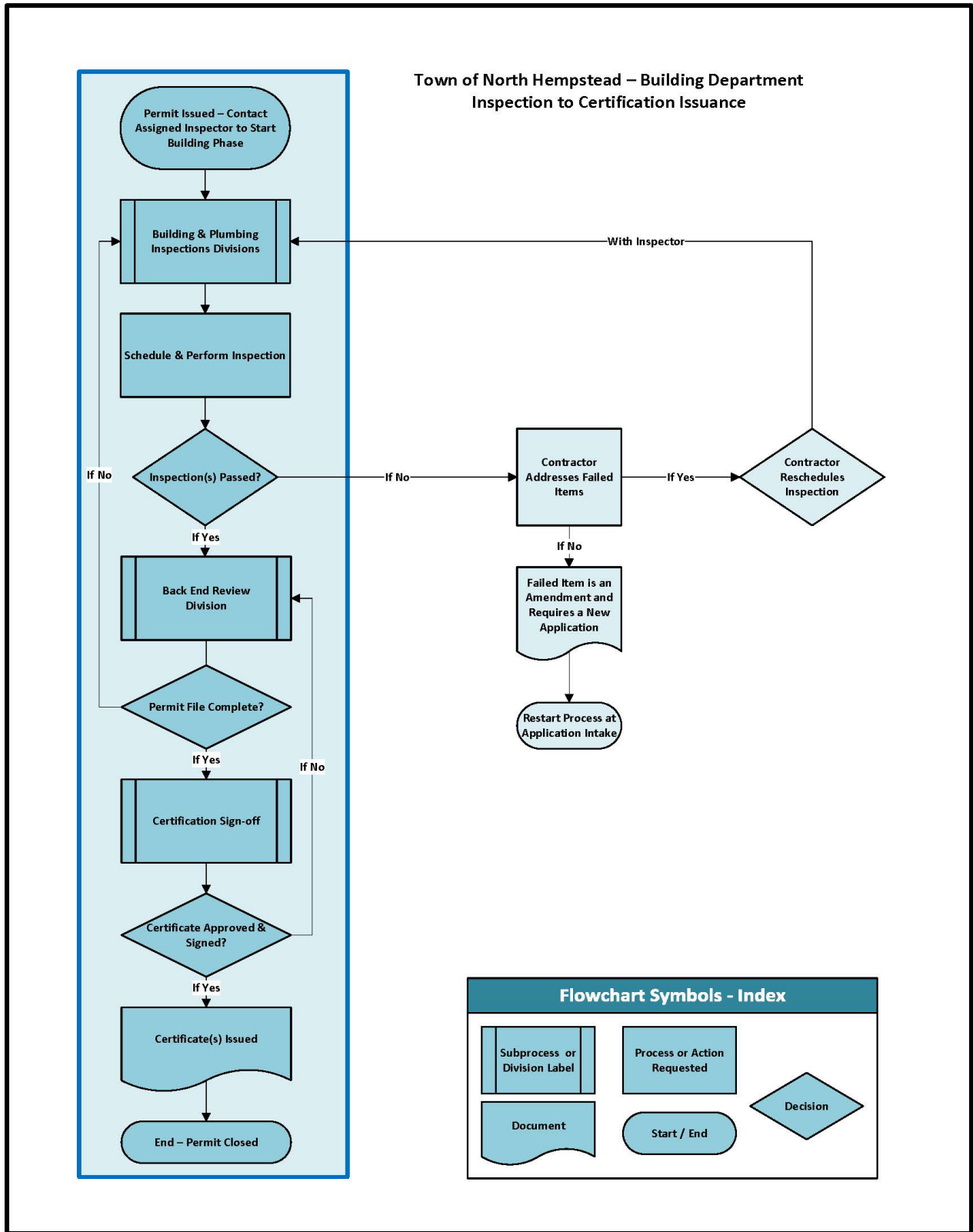
After verifying all the required documents existed and agree, the user may proceed to generate the appropriate Certificate for the permit which will then need to be signed by the Commissioner. The Building Department issues the following five different types of certificates for closing out a permit:

1. Certificate of Approval
2. Certificate of Completion
3. Certificate of Existing Use
4. Certificate of Occupancy
5. Temporary Certificate of Occupancy

The Commissioner (or his designee), Deputy Commissioner, or Assistant to the Commissioner will review the certificate and if deemed acceptable will digitally sign the certificate. The permit file will then be reassigned to the employee who performed the Back-End Review to email the signed certificate(s) to the property owner and close out the permit file within Citizenserve.

Appendix C – Detailing the Inspection to Certificate Issuance Process

Flowchart of the Inspection to Certificate Issuance Process



Appendix D – Types of Inspections

The following are the 57 different types of inspections that exist within Citizenserve and whether they apply to Building Inspectors, Plumbing Inspectors, or both.

Town of North Hempstead Building Department Types of Inspections (Building or Plumbing)					Town of North Hempstead Building Department Types of Inspections (Building or Plumbing)				
#	Inspection Type	Building	Plumbing	Both	#	Inspection Type	Building	Plumbing	Both
1	AC Condensers		✓		30	Inspection for Public Assembly	✓		
2	Air Handlers		✓		31	Inspection for Rental Registration	✓		
3	BBQ		✓		32	Inspector Recommendation	✓		
4	Boilers		✓		33	Insulation Inspection	✓		
5	Complaint Inspections			✓	34	Issue a Summons Records			✓
6	Complaint Re-Inspection			✓	35	Mounting of Equipment Inspection		✓	
7	Concrete Slab Preparation	✓			36	Outdoor Space Heater		✓	
8	Cooktop		✓		37	Plumbing Rough		✓	
9	Demolition Initial	✓			38	Pool Foundation Form / Base	✓		
10	Dryer		✓		39	Pool Heater		✓	
11	Drywell Inspection	✓			40	Pressure Test		✓	
12	Duct Insulation		✓		41	Roof Top Heater		✓	
13	Duct Rough		✓		42	Septic System		✓	
14	Excavation / Footing Inspection	✓			43	Sewer		✓	
15	Excavation Inspection	✓			44	Site Inspection			✓
16	Excavation Site Inspection	✓			45	Site Inspection for renewal	✓		
17	Final Signoff			✓	46	Site Visit – Delinquent Public Assembly	✓		
18	Fire Pit			✓	47	Site Visit – Delinquent Rental	✓		
19	Fire Sprinkler		✓		48	Steamer		✓	
20	Fire Stopping Inspection	✓			49	Stove		✓	
21	Fireplace			✓	50	Strapping Inspection	✓		
22	Foundation Form Inspection	✓			51	Tree -Final Inspection	✓		
23	Framing Inspection	✓			52	Tree -Pre-Inspection	✓		
24	Furnace		✓		53	Underground Rough		✓	
25	Generator		✓		54	Unit Heater		✓	
26	Hot Water Heater		✓		55	Water Heater		✓	
27	Indirect Water Heater		✓		56	Water Service		✓	
28	Infrared Heater		✓		57	Waterproofing Inspection	✓		
29	Initial Site Inspection	✓							

Appendix E – Examples of Omission Letters

Omission Letter 1



Town of North Hempstead

Department of Building Safety, Inspection & Enforcement
210 Plandome Road, Manhasset, NY 11030-2326
www.northhempsteadny.gov

Commercial Zoning Omission Letter

April 13, 2021

Permit No: [REDACTED]
Premises Location: [REDACTED]
S-B-L: [REDACTED]
Zone: [REDACTED];

Proposed Work: New one story building [REDACTED]
Owner: [REDACTED] **Address:** [REDACTED]
Applicant: [REDACTED] **Address:** [REDACTED]
Design Professional: [REDACTED] **Address:** [REDACTED]

Dear Applicant

In order to continue the review of the subject application the following information and/or clarifications shall be provided:

1. The change of zone for the rear portion of the proposed parcel which includes a portion of present lot 210 to district Business-A was granted under Town Board Resolution #315-2020 on August 13, 2020 under the condition that the curbcut on [REDACTED] shall be channelized so as to preclude right-turn egress. Please demonstrate compliance with this condition of the Change of Zone resolution.
2. The site plan shows a trash enclosure in the rear yard - Indicated as site plan note <2>. The detail referenced in this note is not in the submitted documents. In accordance with 28-22B(2) of the Town Code, garbage stored on the exterior must be acceptably enclosed. Please demonstrate that this enclosure screens all garbage from view. In addition, please provide the height of the fencing for the enclosure, which may not exceed 7 feet per 70-135 of the Town Zoning Code. Lastly, please be aware that a garbage enclosure is considered an accessory structure that must comply with yard setback requirements. The enclosure is shown being located 5 feet from the rear property line, which does not comply with the 20 foot rear yard requirement of 70-134 of the Town Zoning Code. Once all zoning omissions have been addressed, this item will be listed on a Notice of Disapproval that may be appealed to the Board of Zoning Appeals.
3. The site plan shows additional fencing along the north side property line - Indicated as site plan note <32>. The detail referenced in this note is not in the submitted documents. Please specify the height of all proposed fencing. 70-135 of the Town Zoning Code limits all fencing to 7 feet in height. If the fencing shall be greater than 7 feet in height, then you must file for the fencing at this time, so that the fencing application can be included in the Notice of Disapproval to be appealed to the Board of Zoning Appeals.
4. Please provide paving details or otherwise demonstrate compliance with 70-103C of the Town of North Hempstead Zoning Code - Indicated as site plan notes <7>, <8>, <9>, & <10>. The details referenced in these notes are not in the submitted documents.
5. The site plans show 13 drywells, 14 catch basins, and a yard drain - Indicated as site plan notes <22>, <23>, & <24>. The details referenced in these notes are not in the submitted documents. Please demonstrate compliance with 70-202.2 and 70-219D(7)(e) of the Town of North Hempstead Zoning Code. Although the first code only requires retention of 2½ inches of stormwater, the second code in effect due to the applicability of site plan review has a requirement of 5 inches of stormwater retention for all impervious areas of the premises. Please provide calculations demonstrating compliance with this requirement.
6. Please label all proposed signage as "To be filed under separate application". It must be clear that the Building Permit is not inclusive of the signage which must always be filed separately. This includes the ground sign indicated as site plan note <39>, and the two wall signs indicated as elevation page notes <11> & <12>. In addition, please clarify site plan note <29> which is listed as a monument sign but for which no actual element could be located on the site plan which is labelled with this note.
7. If you wish for the signage listed above to be included in the zoning review, then you must submit sign applications for each sign at this time. Insufficient information has been provided to perform a complete review. However the ground sign does not comply with 70-196J(2)(c) of the Town Zoning Code which requires all ground signs to be located at least 10 feet from all property lines. In addition, if there shall be both this pylon sign and the monument sign, both of which are ground signs per the code, then having

Appendix E – Examples of Omission Letters

more than one would not comply with 70-196J(2)(a) and the monument sign indicated as 40 square feet would exceed to 24 square foot limit of 70-196J(2)(b). It is not required to file for the signs at this time, but it is potentially advantageous to file them at the present time in order for any necessary variances to be appealed to the Board of Zoning Appeals along with the main development of the site.

8. The site plan shows that 9 parking spaces are to be 10' x 18', where 70-103B of the Town Code requires parking spaces to be 10' x 20'. The zoning analysis indicates that you are aware of this issue of non-compliance and that you will be seeking a variance. In addition, for parking spaces of only 18 feet in depth, 70-103O requires the drive aisle to be 24 feet wide, however the site plan shows the drive aisle behind the 18' deep spaces to be only 20 feet wide. Once all above zoning issues have been addressed, a Notice of Disapproval shall be issued which may be appealed to the Board of Zoning Appeals.
9. The site plan and zoning analysis shows a 5 foot landscape buffer along the majority but not the entirety of the north property line adjacent to the Residence-C district, and shows no landscape buffer between the northern portion of the east side property line also adjacent to the Residence-C district. 70-203G of the Town of North Hempstead Zoning Code requires a 15 foot landscaped buffer located along the property lines adjacent to a residential zoning district installed on the business district side of the property line within the property. The zoning analysis indicates that you are aware of this issue of non-compliance and that you will be seeking a variance. Once all above zoning issues have been addressed, a Notice of Disapproval shall be issued which may be appealed to the Board of Zoning Appeals.
10. Please be aware that the issuance of a Notice of Disapproval for the proposed site development is contingent on either concurrent or prior issuance of a Notice of Disapproval to subdivide the lot to the north (lot 210) covered under applications [REDACTED] & [REDACTED] in order to apportion the southern half of lot 210 with presently existing lot 220. The Notice of Disapproval will indicate that the entire proposed development of the new building for [REDACTED] is contingent upon the concurrent or prior approval by the BZA of the subdivision.
11. The proposed lot is 178.32' x 150' = 26,748 square feet. In accordance with 70-219A of the Town of North Hempstead Code, you will be required to file with the Planning Department for a Site Plan Review before the Town Board after all zoning issues have been addressed or the appropriate variances have been granted by the Board of Zoning Appeals. This requirement will also appear on the Notice of Disapproval.

The above constitutes a review for zoning compliance only. The following additional items do not need to be addressed prior to the issuance of a Notice of Disapproval. They must be provided once a variance has been granted by the Board of Zoning Appeals or zoning compliance has otherwise been demonstrated. The following does not represent a comprehensive list of NYS Building Code issues, but lists identified issues which may affect the design and layout of the spaces or require additional applications or submissions. Further/complete NYS Building Code review shall follow once zoning compliance has been demonstrated:

1. The project includes work on a property adjacent to a Nassau County owned roadway [REDACTED]. You must file an application with Nassau County Department of Public Works in accordance with NYS General Municipal Law 239-F. A Building Permit will not be issued until the Building Department has received an approval from Nassau County or a letter from Nassau County waiving the requirements for filing in accordance with 239-F.

Unless otherwise directed, all information requested *must appear on the drawings*. All references to a NYS Code shall be construed as a reference to the respective code book of the 2020 NYS Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code effective May 12, 2020.

The following is an abridged list of all documents and applications which must be included in the complete resubmission:

1. A written response which annotates your response to each omission comment
2. A complete set of revised Zoning Drawings

Resubmit only when all above issues have been addressed. Please ensure that your responses are complete and contain all the requested documentation and/or revisions. Incomplete submissions will only create further delays. In order to better expedite your file, please include a copy of this letter with your resubmission to the Building Department.

To resubmit please log onto MyToNH.com. Please contact buildings@northhempsteadny.gov for any questions regarding the resubmission process.

Should you require clarification of any of the above issues please contact me at [REDACTED]

Very truly yours,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Appendix E – Examples of Omission Letters

Department of Buildings
Town of North Hempstead
210 Plandome Road
Manhasset, New York 11030

MyToNH.com

It is the policy of this Department to abandon and destroy, without-notification, any application that has been left dormant by the owner or agent thereof for one hundred and twenty (120) days. Therefore, failure to respond within one hundred and twenty (120) days of this writing will be considered abandonment of the application and the file will be destroyed.

**Effective December 18, 2019 all application correspondence will now be sent electronically.
No further mailed correspondence will be sent regarding this application.**

Appendix E – Examples of Omission Letters

Omission Letter 2

View

From: [Redacted]
Sent: [Redacted]
To: [Redacted]
CC: [Redacted]
Subject: Omissions - Commercial



Town of North Hempstead

Department of Building Safety, Inspection & Enforcement
210 Plandome Road, Manhasset, NY 11030-2326
www.northhempsteadny.gov

Commercial Omission Letter

September 23, 2021

Permit No: [Redacted]
Premises Location: [Redacted]
S-B-L: [Redacted]
Zone: [Redacted]
Proposed Work: Interior alteration to create new [Redacted] tenancy
Owner: [Redacted] Address: [Redacted]
Applicant: [Redacted] Address: [Redacted]
Design Professional: [Redacted] Address: [Redacted]

Dear Applicant

In order to continue the review of the subject application the following information and/or clarification shall be provided:

- 1. The new [Redacted] tenancy is proposing additional counter service for the placement of a food order. Therefore, either the proposed counter service space must be reduced to the previous [Redacted] counter service or a conditional use variance will have to be obtained from the BZA, as per Chapter 70-225(B)(7)(a)[2] in the Zoning Code.
2. The parking layout must demonstrate compliance with Table 1106.1 in the NYS Building Code and Section 1106.1.1 in the 2017 Uniform Code Supplement (An 8' wide handicap parking space and 8' wide handicap access aisle must be provided). Required signage with details must also be provided for the handicap space, as per Section 502.7 in the ICC A117.1-2009 Edition. (SECOND REQUEST)
3. Emergency egress lighting must be provided, as per Section 1008.3 in the 2020 NYS Building Code.
4. Plans must specify the size, type, and location of all required portable fire extinguishers in accordance with Section 906 in the 2020 NYS Fire Code.
5. As per Sections 18.3.3 and 18.6.3 in the Nassau County Fire Prevention Ordinance, a fire alarm system is required. Therefore, fire alarms plans must be submitted, and proof of filing with the NCFM must be provided.
6. The plans show a new hood and ansul system. Therefore, an HVAC permit application must be submitted for this mechanical equipment, and proof of filing with the NCFM must be provided.
7. A schematic occupant load breakdown/calculation must be provided on plans, specifying the total occupant load, as per Table 1004.5 in the 2020 NYS Building Code. As per Table 1004.5 in the 2020 NYS Building Code, the kitchen area shall be calculated as 1 occupant per 200 square feet of gross floor area, the standing space in front of the service counter/register as 1 occupant per 5 net floor

Appendix E – Examples of Omission Letters

Letter View

area, the unconcentrated tables/chairs as 1 occupant per 15 net floor area, and any other general remaining open business space as 1 occupant per 150 gross floor area.

8. Based on the total occupant load, plans must demonstrate compliance with the minimum number of required plumbing fixtures, as per Chapter 4 in the 2020 NYS Plumbing Code. As per Chapter 4 in the 2020 NYS Plumbing Code, a business occupancy with an occupant load greater than 25 persons requires two (2) separate bathroom facilities, and an occupant load greater than 15 persons requires a service sink to be provided in the tenancy.

Unless otherwise directed, all information requested *must appear on the drawing*. All reference to a NYS Code shall be construed as a reference to the respective code book of the 2020 NYS Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code effective May 12, 2020.

The following is an abridged list of all documents and applications which must be included in the complete resubmission:

1. A written response which annotates your response to each omission comment
2. A complete set of **revised** Construction Drawings
3. Complete Fire Alarm System Drawings
4. An HVAC/Mechanical Application for the Commercial Kitchen Hood/Exhaust
5. A receipt of filing or affidavit of filing the Fire Alarm System with the Nassau County Fire Marshal
6. A receipt of filing or affidavit of filing the Commercial Kitchen Hood/Exhaust with the Nassau County Fire Marshal

Resubmit only when all above issues have been addressed. Please ensure that your responses are complete and contain all the requested documentation and/or revisions. Incomplete submissions will only create further delays. In order to better expedite your file, please include a copy of this letter with your resubmission to the Building Department.

To resubmit please log onto MyToNH.com.

- o Click on View my Request
- o Choose the permit number that you are submitting for
- o Click Edit my Permit on the left hand side column
- o Scroll to the bottom of the permit page. Here you will find the fields to upload your resubmission documents.

Please do not upload documents to any other fields, including the Upload Documents field located on the left-hand side column. Uploading documents in this field will not send notifications to the plan examiner. Only Applicants can upload revised documents, if you are not the current applicant on the project but wish to upload the revised documents, please inform us.

Should you require clarification of any of the above issues please contact me at

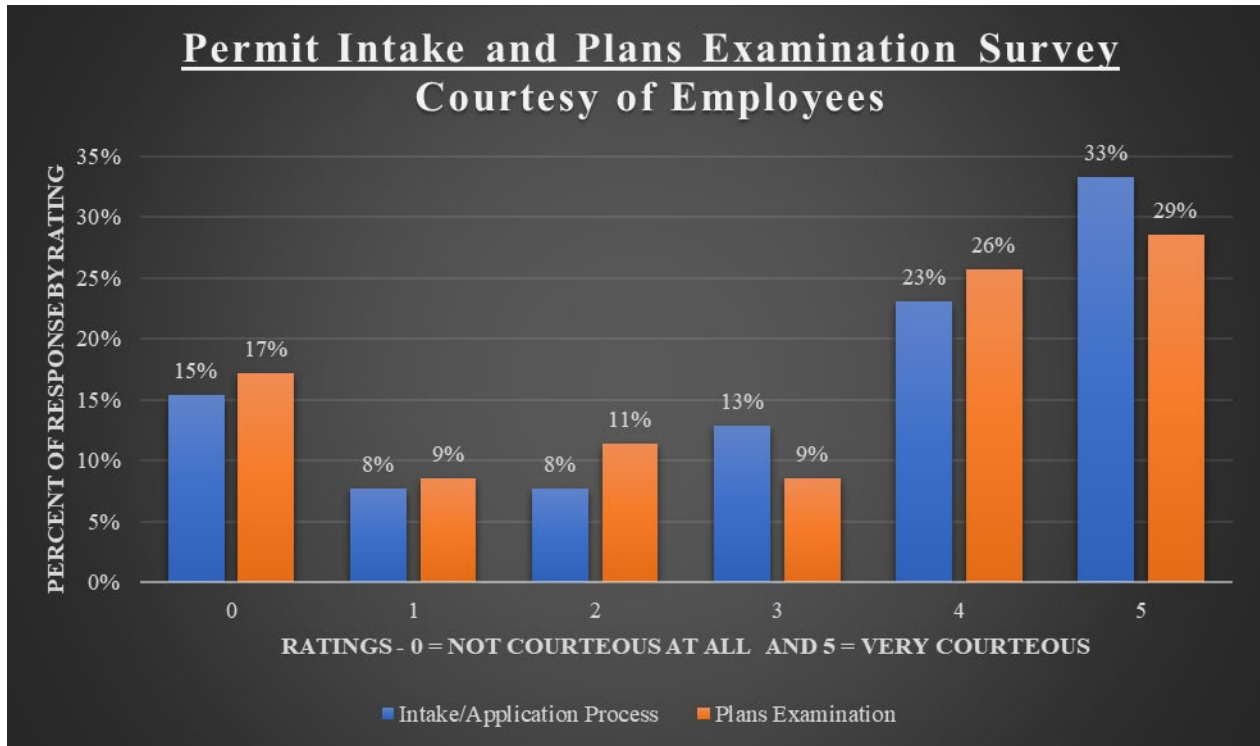
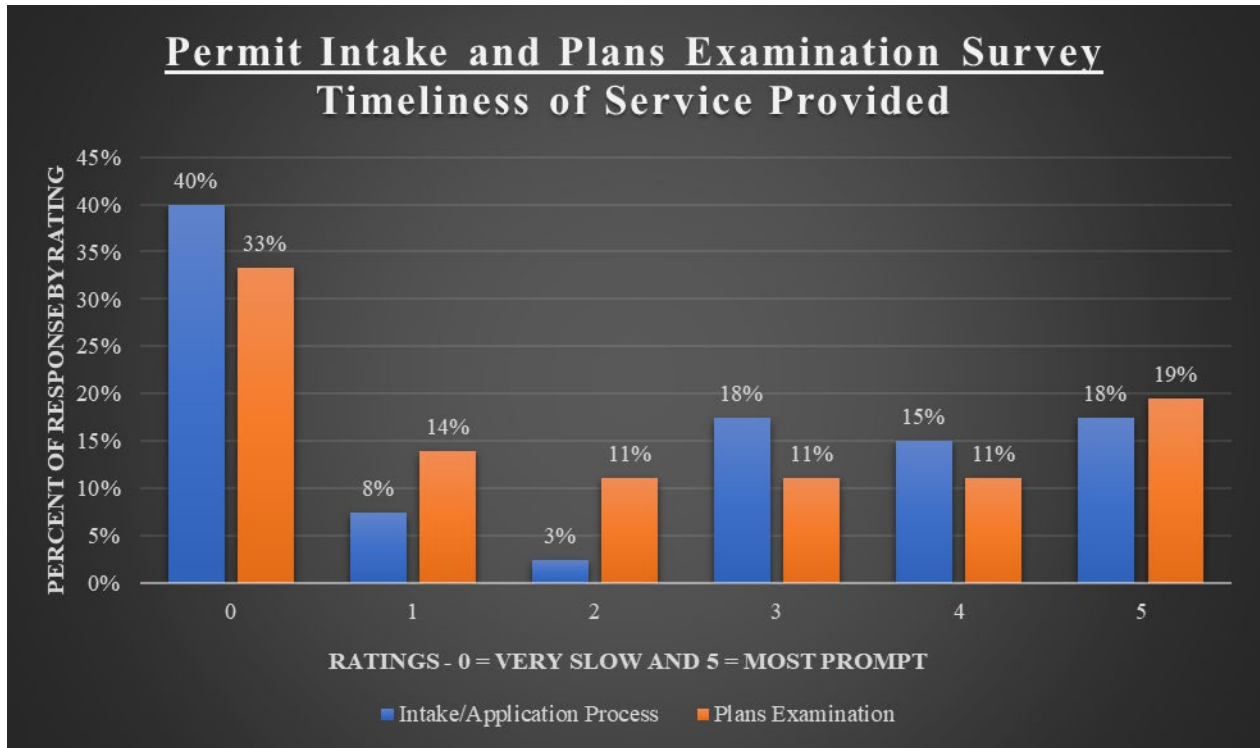
[REDACTED]
Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Department of Buildings
Town of North Hempstead
210 Plandome Road
Manhasset, New York 11030

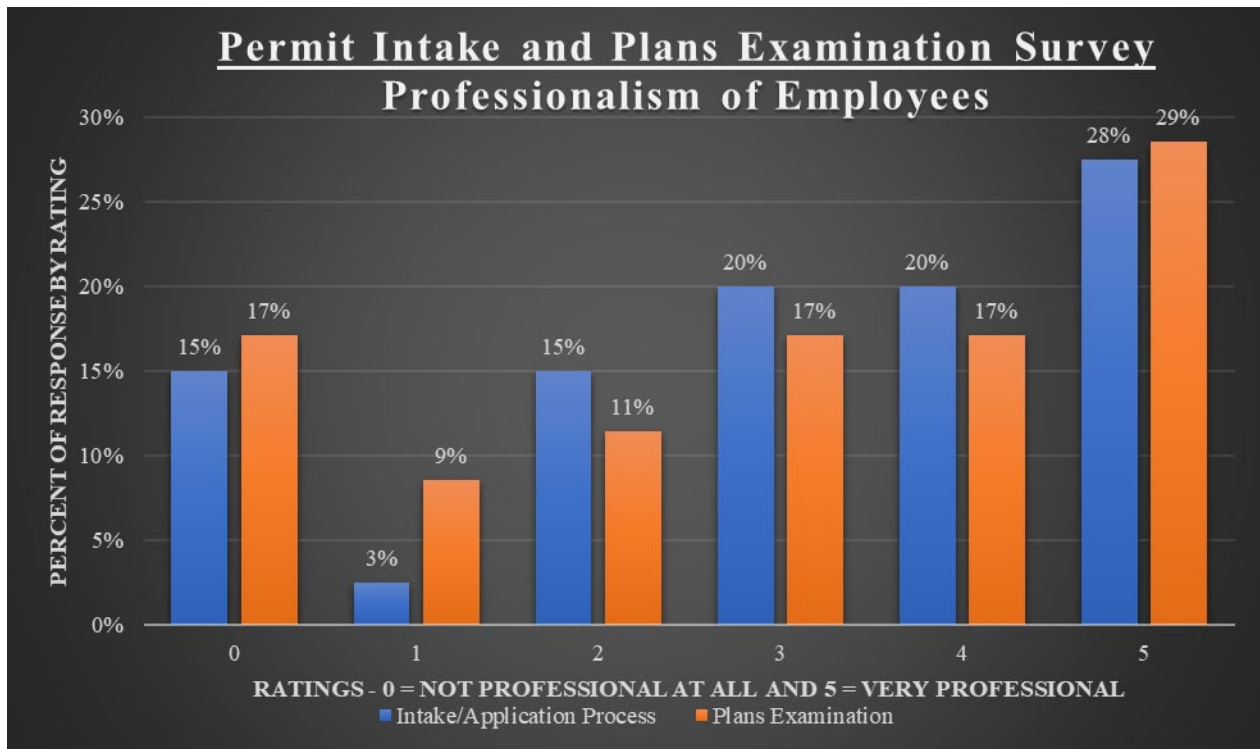
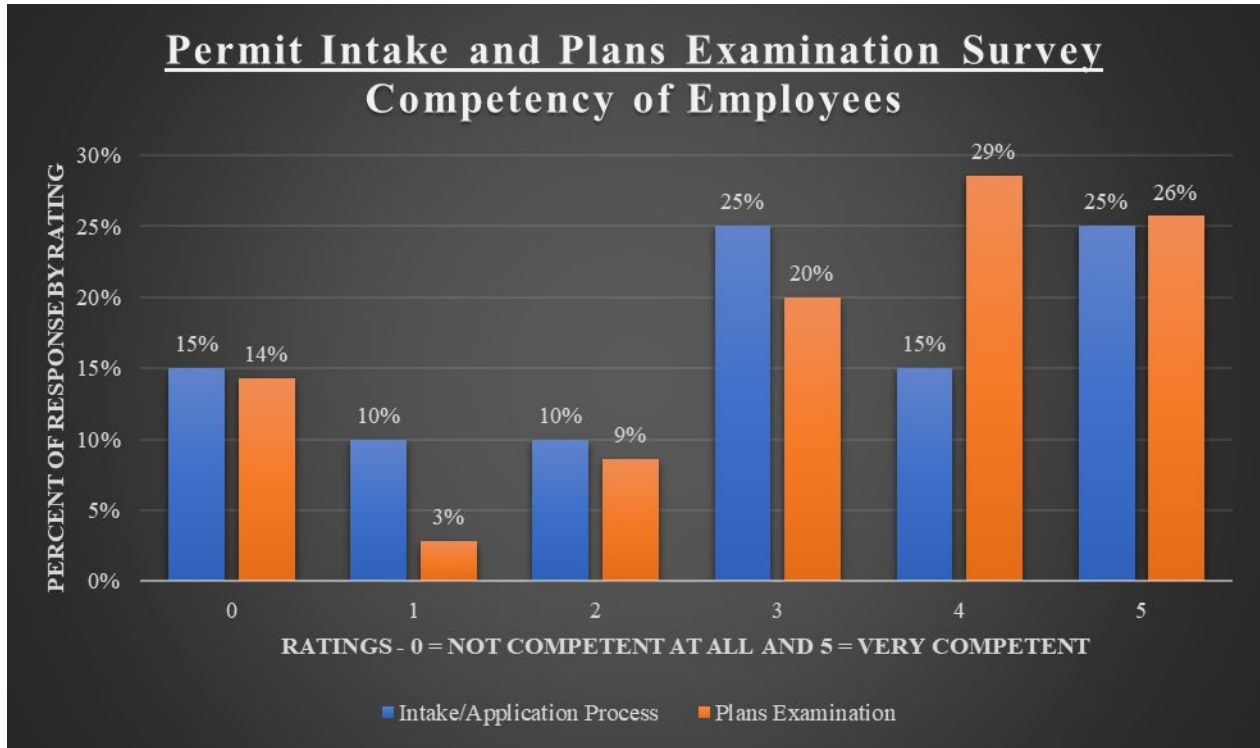
[REDACTED]
MyToNH.com

It is the policy of this Department to abandon and destroy, without-notification, any application that has been left dormant by the owner or agent thereof for one hundred and twenty (120) days. Therefore, failure to respond within one hundred and twenty (120) days of this writing will be considered abandonment of the application and the file will be destroyed.

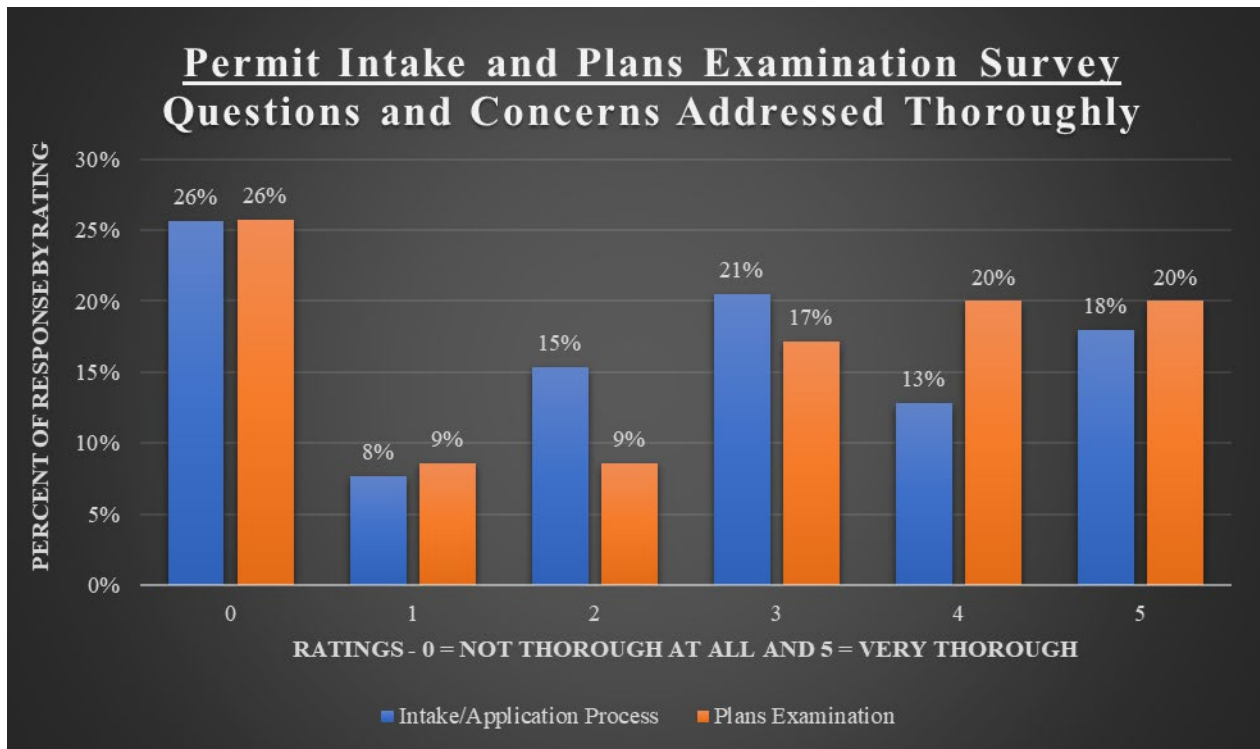
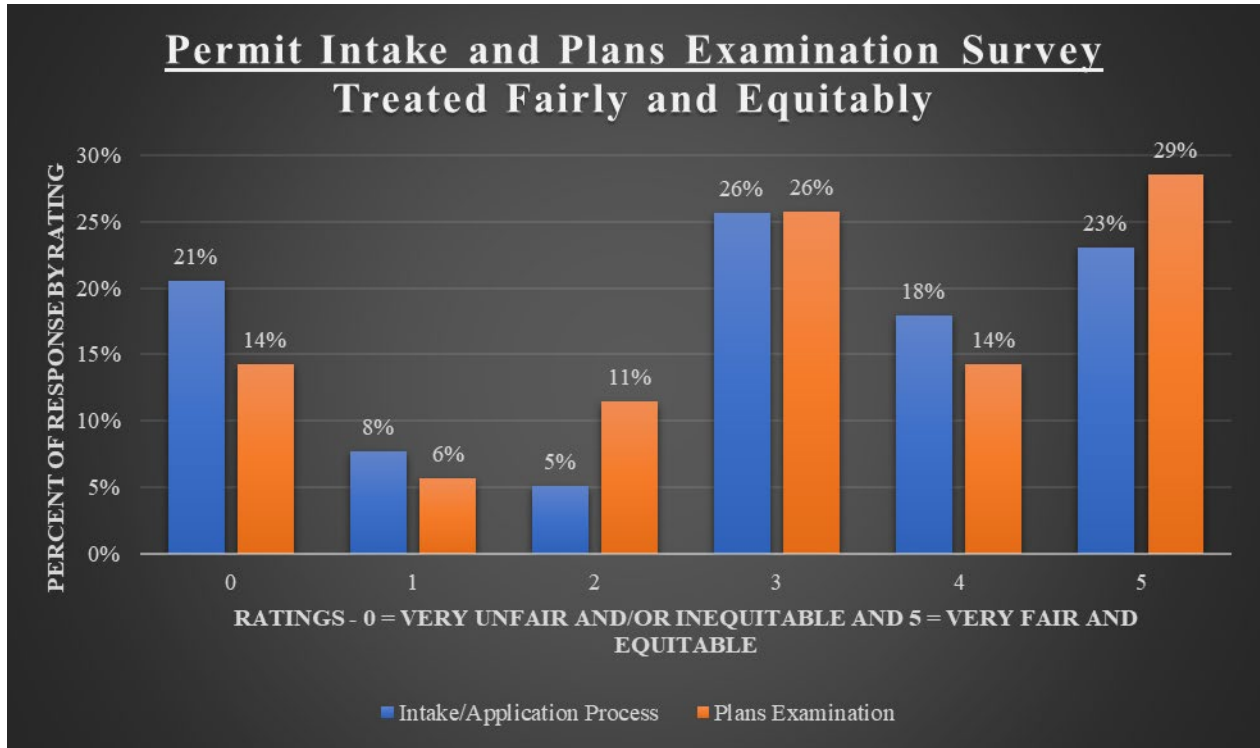
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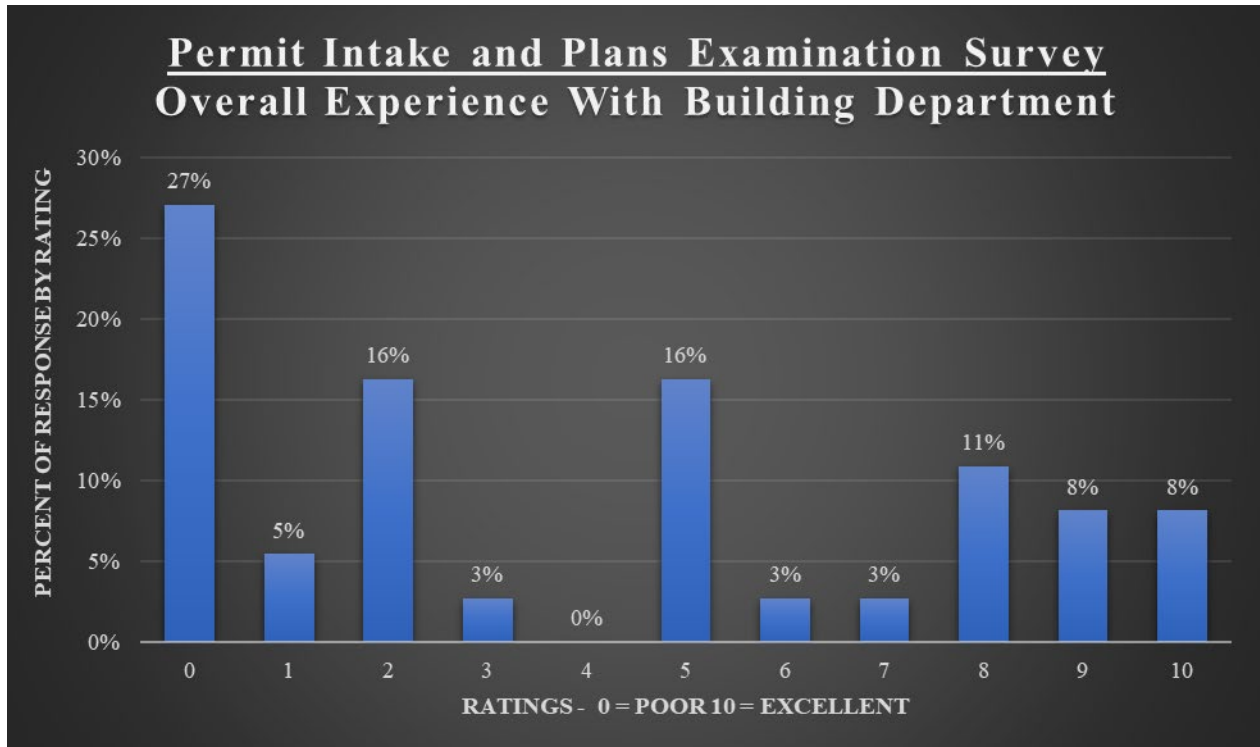
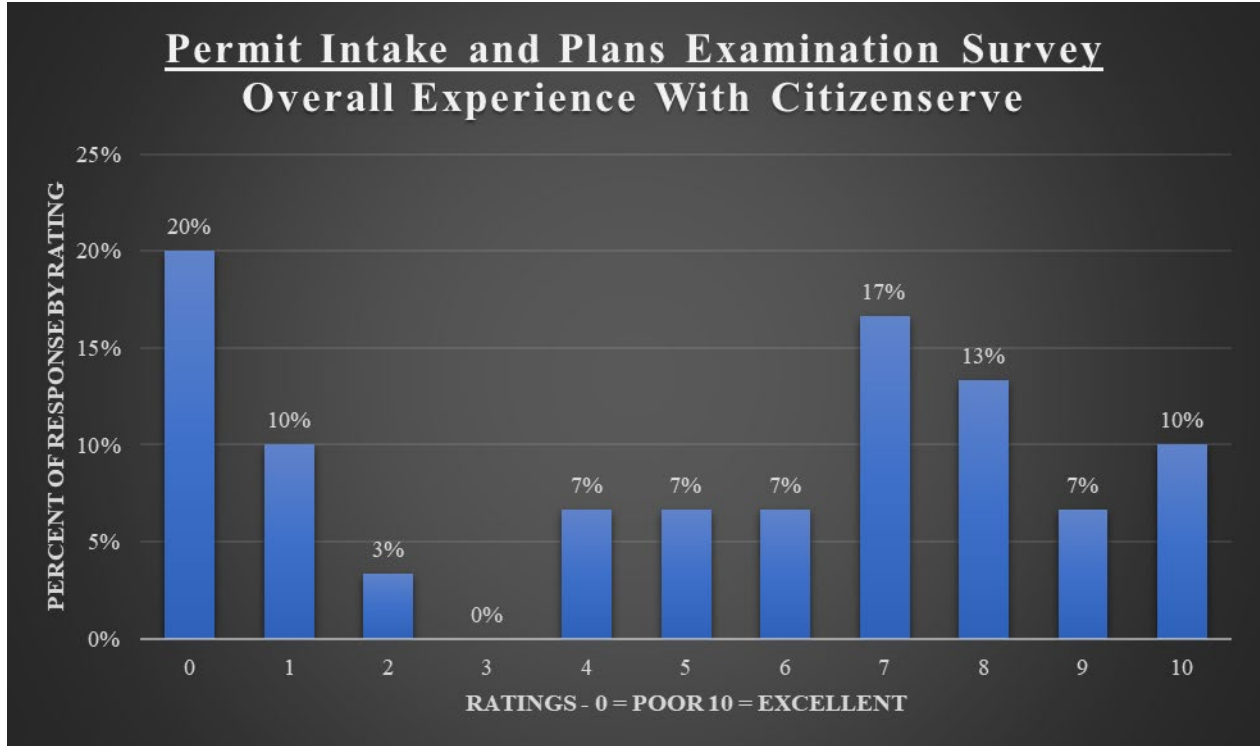
Appendix F – Permit Intake and Plans Examination Survey Results



Appendix F – Permit Intake and Plans Examination Survey Results



Appendix F – Permit Intake and Plans Examination Survey Results



Appendix G – Permit Intake and Plans Examination Survey Results Narrative Responses

Note: Below are narrative responses to one open text question asked in the Comptroller's Permit Intake and Plans Examination survey. Responses are presented in their original format, except where redacted as indicated.

Question: Is there anything else you would like to share with regard to your Permitting experience with the Town of North Hempstead Building Department?	
No.	Constituent Comment
1	<p>Overall the process is really well handled. Having to file certain applications at the beginning of the filing process such as highway or infrastructure permits before a review can happen doesn't mesh well with the other municipalities (such as highways) who expect work to begin right after the permit is issued by them, not 6 months-12 months later.</p> <p>The permit pending process is a bit janky. Having to fill in contractor information upwards of 6-8 times in each application is a grueling process. The permits that run parallel to the building permit, such as plumbing, gas, drainage, hvac, infrastructure should all update or relate to each other as the primary permit, the building permit, has all the necessary information already there. its a lot of redundancy.</p>
2	<p>Based on my experience, in just trying to legalize my home, as is, without doing any construction myself; I would strongly advise against buying a home in the Town of North Hempstead. It should not take years to legalize a home when a previous home owner is solely responsible for the illegal construction.</p>
3	<p>when i applied for permit during the beginning of the pandemic. every process was so slow. it took me 6 months to get the permit to start the work. and another 6 months to complete inspection. i wish the process could be faster, like NYC only take few days to get a permit and a licensed architect can sign off the plan. There are many old buidling and houses in Town of North Hempstead. if the permit process got easier and affordable, I am sure lots of homeowners are willing to upgrade their houses.</p>
4	<p>I would say :-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 - open online portal for us 2- pick up phones / response to emails 3- we should be able to see where is our permit 4 - be lenient to some of permits. <p>For pool :- I had to put 40 thousand dollars to put a Dry well I had to speak 10 k for fence , when I already had a fence.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5- be prompt in giving permit. 6- let us enjoy Nassau county and make this permit journey enjoying and fruitful
5	<p>It took way too long for my permit to be approved. It took so long that local ordinances changed while I was waiting for approval and then plans failed and had to be redone to meet ordinance. It was very difficult to get someone on the phone to answer questions about the application process or permit status. Random permit fees during different stages of the process. I felt like inspectors and the town work against homeowners. Many contractors and architects refuse to work in town of North Hempstead because of how difficult it is to do business here. Appeals process is unfair and many homeowners lead to believe the town will work out compromises to homeowners issues and then fail them without consideration - charging fees to appeal and then failing them.</p>

Appendix G – Permit Intake and Plans Examination Survey Results Narrative Responses

No.	Constituent Comment
6	I was concerned that the process to get open permits closed would be overwhelming but was surprised at the level of attention and professionalism of everyone I dealt with in the department. [name redacted] lived up to his promise to get things moving along and [name redacted] was very accommodating in getting paperwork finished on a tight timeline so that I could have it in time for closing. I have only good things to say about the building department.
7	I don't believe these permits were open at all. The projects (connecting the house to the main sewer and putting in a half bath in the basement) were done at a time when all of it was on paper. I think the building dept/TNH lost the papers and wanted my money and so claimed these permits were open. And, the connection to the street sewer was done at approximately the same time the sewer in the street was done. How could it have been done without a permit. Plus, the owner at that time had paid the fee for the permit and I had the receipt which I showed to the building dept yet I had to pay a fee as well. No one ever came to inspect, which tells me that the dept knew the work was acceptable. The house had already been sold in 1994 with these two permits allegedly open, though it never came up during that sale. I was over a barrel because my house was in contract to sell. Outrageous. And it happened to many others who sold their houses around then. If I had argued it, they could have dragged out the process so all of my actions were done under duress. These people are criminals and a class action lawsuit should be filed. Feel free to contact me in writing for any further information.
8	The building department employees were very rude and combative. We were so nice and simply wanted to ask a question, but they would shut the door to the office during office hours, forcing many to wait outside only to finally give up. It also took months to receive any feedback.
9	Although my easy fence permit went fast, too many businesses in Port Washington spend years waiting on permits and go out of business before they even open. Something is wrong and needs to change.
10	I have tried to work with the building dept a couple of times. Once was trying to get a new patio. We had a question for [name redacted] the inspector. We tried calling him, emailing and finally going into the office. Nothing. He never returned our calls. I also tried to get a tree removed from my property during covid, and the only place to file was online but the whole application process was convoluted. You had to file out one application for the tree removal and another with a different department, zoning? To mark where the tree was being removed. The two halves were impossible to put together. I personally went down to the dept several times. Finally the tree fell with out anyone being harmed, Thank God.

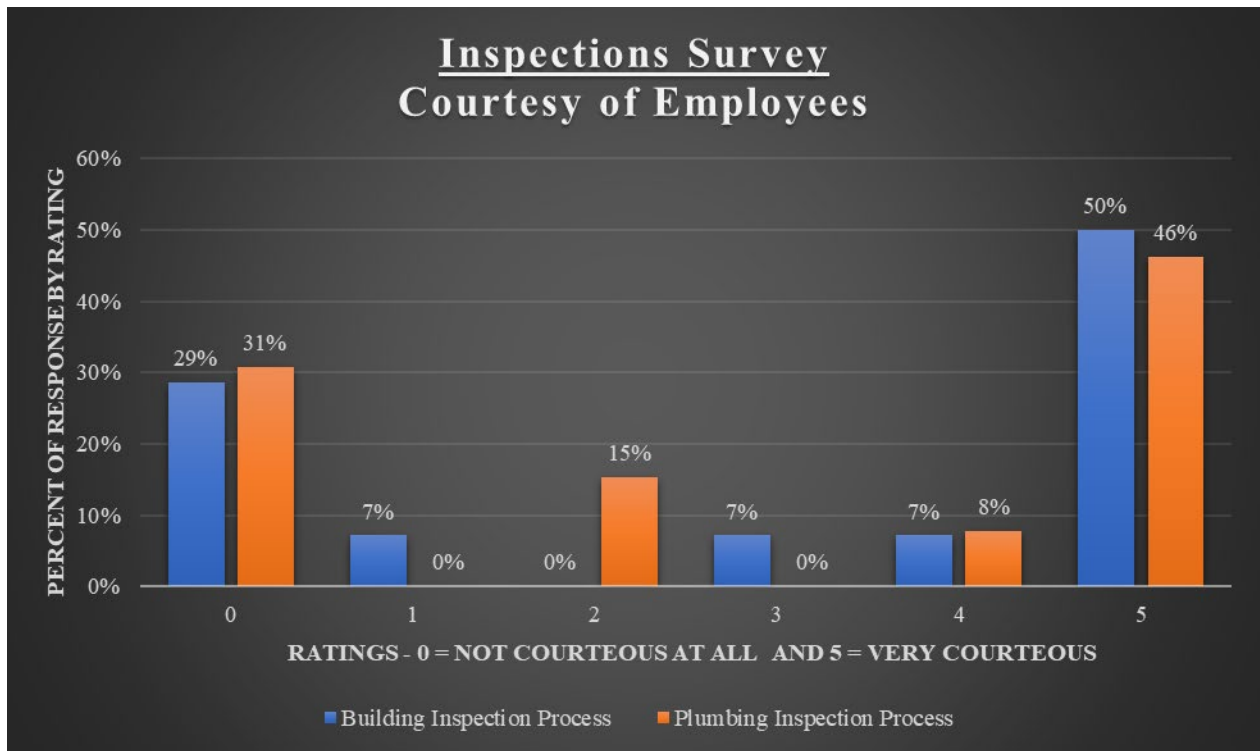
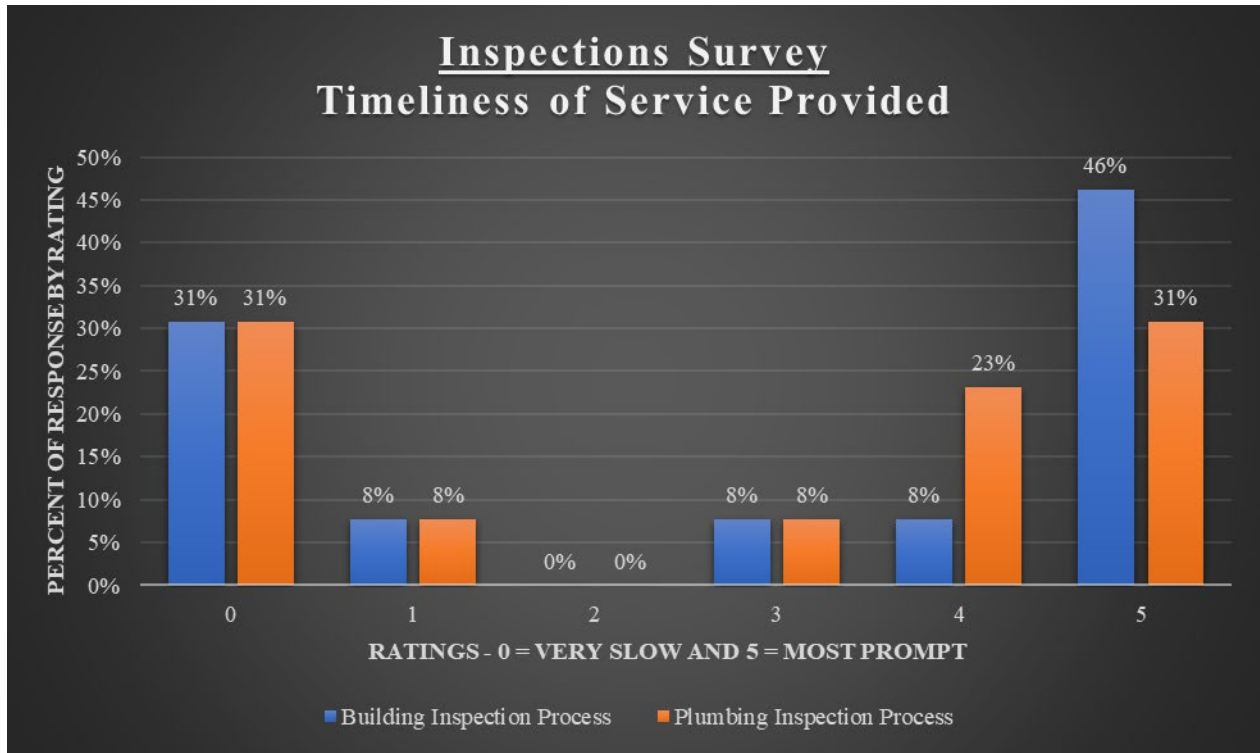
Appendix G – Permit Intake and Plans Examination Survey Results Narrative Responses

No.	Constituent Comment
11	<p>The Building Department is openly violating the open records law. In the Records Room, photographs are banned (but see: Opinions of the Committee on Open Government, including here: https://docsopengovernment.dos.ny.gov/coog/ftext/F19271.html) and then the Department ALSO charges an excessive fee for scans. The Department is able to complete those scans in minutes (or frequently already have in electronic format!) and then email/makes them available on Citizenserve (so basically fit exactly into the Committee's guidance for cases where fees are NOT permitted; see: https://docsopengovernment.dos.ny.gov/coog/ftext/2013/18965.html). If the Department violates this simple part of State law its no wonder that they then operate the rest of their business in a manner that's harmful to the Town and its residents.</p> <p>I wish you could bring the entire Department into something that approaches a somewhat normally functioning government but -- realizing that may not be possible in this State -- at the least I hope the Comptroller's Office can get this very straightforward matter corrected.</p> <p>Regarding the overall process -- the people in the Department can range from totally professional and courteous to outright schmucks. The problem is that the schmucks have created a fortress environment where you are not allowed to talk to the people reviewing the file to come up with a reasonable approach/timeline. A lot of the filing requirements don't make sense -- they can insist that you have a complete file as if the building process is ready to commence immediately (this can include disconnect letters, water letters, permits from DPW, etc) before processing the application for plans examination. The issue is that many of those elements are time-limited letters (water & sewer expire in 1 year) and plans review can take long enough that by the time you are through -- you're back in square 1 and required to reapply and resubmit many of those early components.</p>
12	<p>The building department staff in Manhasset has been wonderful. I have been without a kitchen for seven months and they did everything possible to make sure the permit application was expeditiously processed.</p> <p>[name redacted] has been very helpful and gives great advice.</p>
13	<p>Very slow, very difficult to get in touch with anyone.</p>
14	<p>This was by far the worst aspect of my construction project. The lengthy timelines were horrible and prevent people from moving to areas where the Town building department has jurisdiction. We had to change our architectural plans significantly because the Town's interpretation of the building code was going to force us to file an appeal that would have taken months more. People can't afford those kinds of delays during an already expensive and stressful experience. The Town has no practical side.</p>
15	<p>The portal is a joke, items get lost, can find applications, no one seems to know how it works, extremely slow.</p>

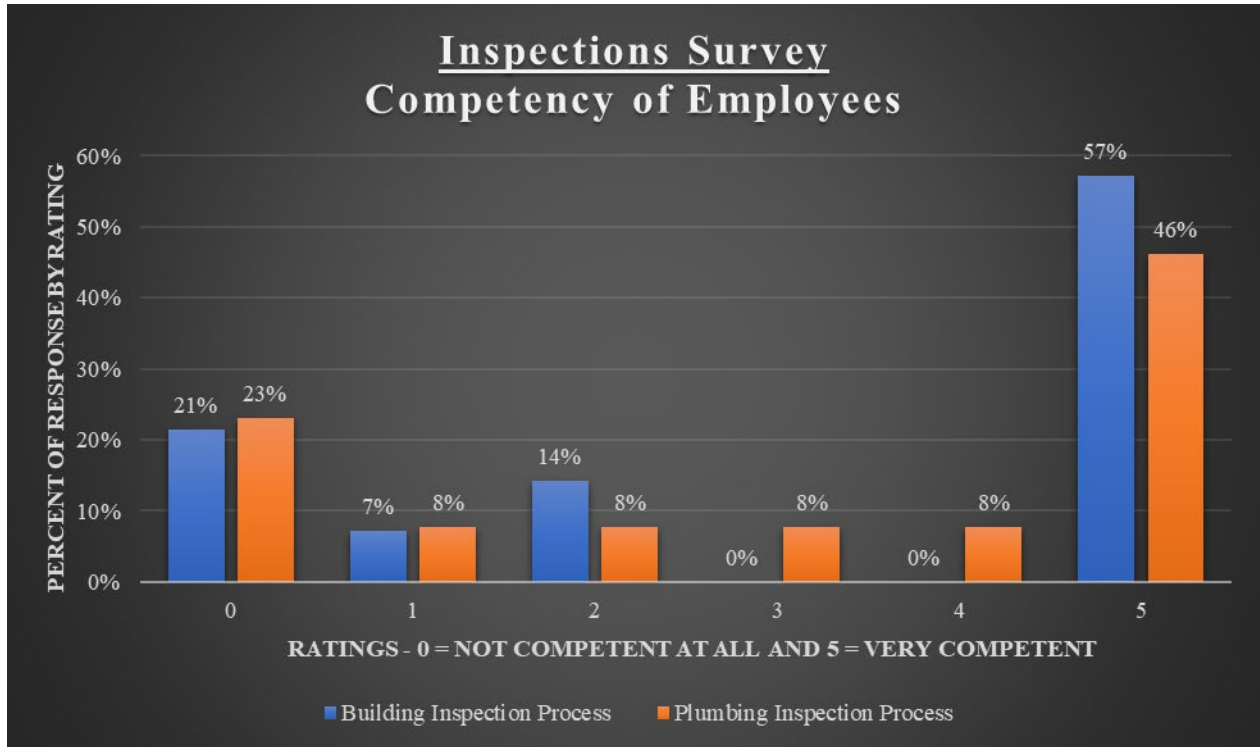
Appendix G – Permit Intake and Plans Examination Survey Results Narrative Responses

No.	Constituent Comment
16	<p>Whether it's me, my friends or everyone I know is miserable with the building department, I have a friend whose application was not even approved for over two years and he had to delay moving over and over again for this , which also delayed the study of his two children. The building department's main problem is that they are inefficient or even ineffective, deliberately embarrassing us residents who pay land taxes on time , in order to seek unknown benefits.</p> <p>Their actions not only affected the normal needs of local residents to improve their houses, but also affected the normal plans of people who want to move here, because everyone knows that our building department here is very difficult to deal with, and because of this, it even affects The normal economic development and construction of our entire region here.</p>
17	THERE HASTO BE A BETTER WAY...I'M BLEEDING TIME AND MONEY AND STILL WAITING FOR APPROVED PLANS...HELP!?!?
18	The time it takes to get a review and approval is determined by the plan examiner. There should be a law with fines that all applications and resubmittals must to be reviewed within 3 weeks time.
19	When they were inspecting my kitchen renovation I was forced to install an egress window in my basement. The basement was already finished when I purchased the home. I filed for permits and was forced install the egress window and now it's not ever a requirement.
20	The portal was not used effectively to set any expectations for when filings would be reviewed. Required multiple phone calls and then emails to ensure simple filings were reviewed. Multiple months passed prior to very minor review comments were provided, or no comments at all. I believe that if expectations were better set and managed that the process would be better respected and more responsibly delivered.
21	THE PORTAL IS VERY SLOW AND APPLICATION PROCESS TO FILL OUT INFO FOR PERMITS IS MORE DIFFCULT THAN OTHER TOWNSHIPS OR VILLAGES.
22	Some of these rules are outdated. There are certain things that I should be able to do. With out going to court.
23	The on-line permit process for minor home renovations is abysmal. A homeowner who is not an architect or a contractor is unable to get approval. I am a M.D.
24	A backup inspector to cover other inspector's vacations would help. Thank you.

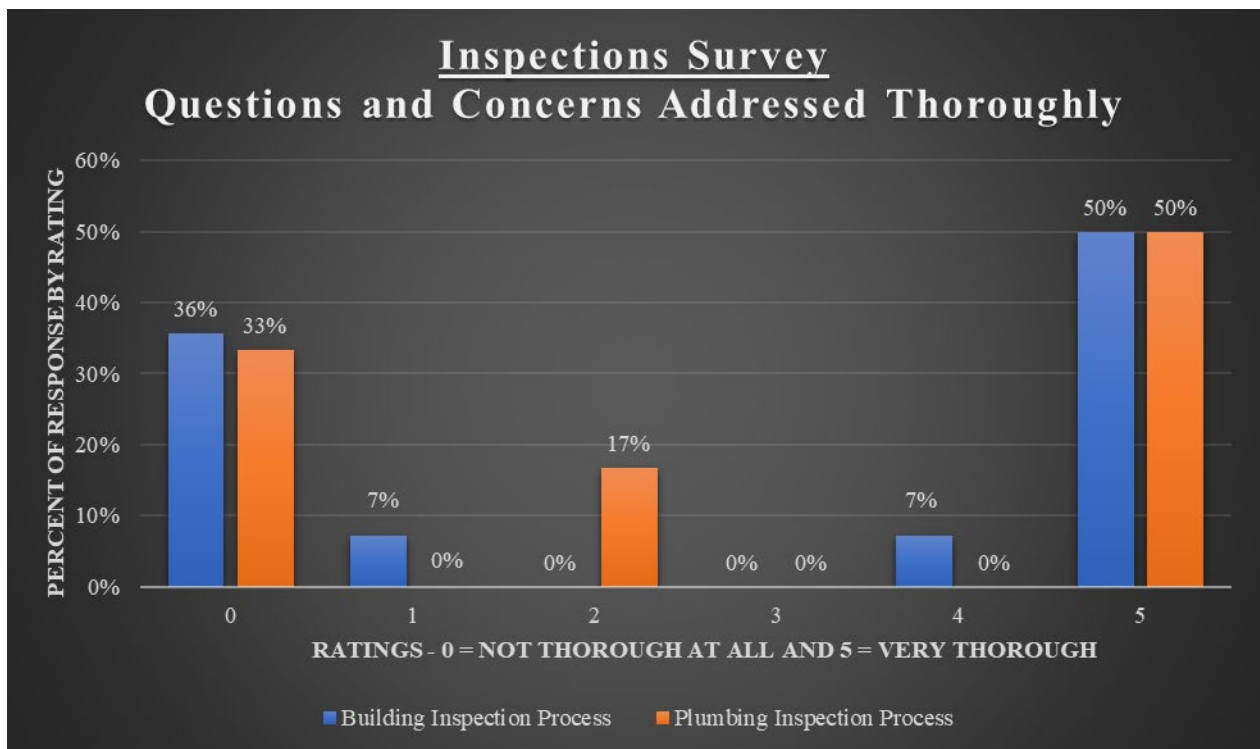
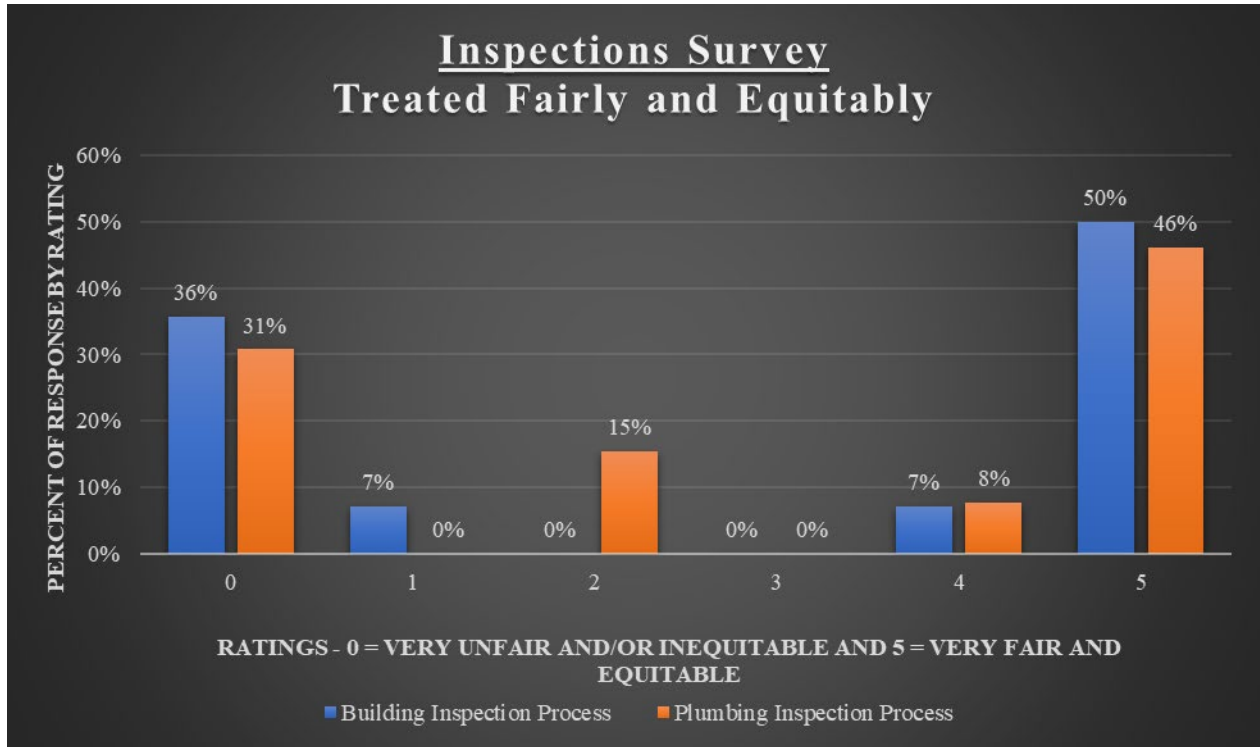
Appendix H – Inspections Survey Results



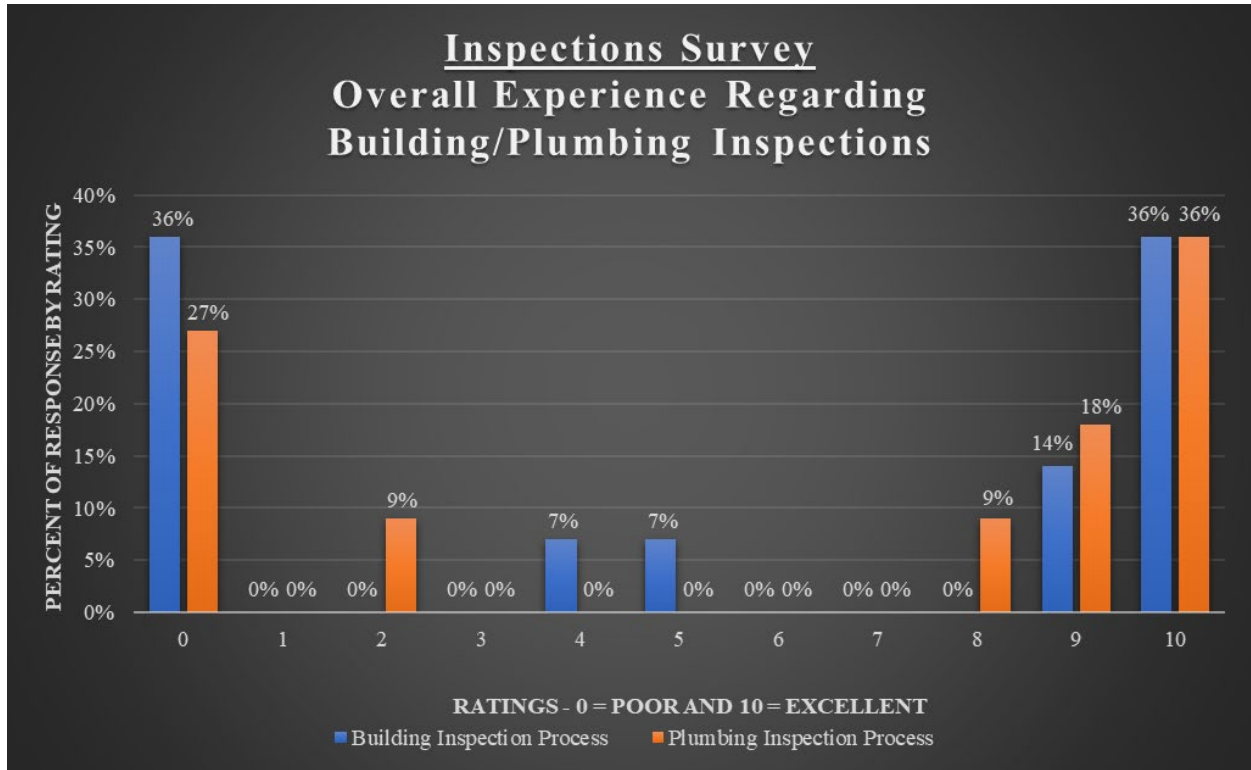
Appendix H – Inspections Survey Results



Appendix H – Inspections Survey Results



Appendix H – Inspections Survey Results



Appendix I – Inspections Survey Narrative Responses

Note: Below are narrative responses to four open text questions asked in the Comptroller’s Inspections survey. Responses are presented in their original format, except where redacted as indicated.

Question: Please feel free to provide information about any specific TONH BUILDING INSPECTION experiences and/or Building Inspectors:	
No.	Constituent Comment
1	Construction inspections are scheduled fairly quick.
2	Many of the inspectors do not understand that we are just trying to make a living and we are working on peoples homes that just want to move back in and they seem to make it even more difficult, some also want you to do things that differ from the approved plans that is not budgeted for on the homeowners or the GC side this is a huge financial burden.
3	The arrogance, pompous ,almighty attitude with almost zero accountability must end. I have architects who refuse to draw prints for TONH and they only have to deal with you for a short time.
4	when there might have been a problem with an inspection with a particular item, they would always refer me back to the continuing education, program , and tell me why there was something wrong
5	Getting a permit is extremely difficult and time consuming. The website has made things somewhat better. With that said it can take upwards of 8-10 weeks to get everything squared away to help a resident that is in need of emergency work done. The answer has been well tell them to get a porta potty or stay in a hotel. They also changed how license were issued last year and communicated the changes about 6 weeks prior to expiration or the license.
6	Without naming names, some of the plumbing inspectors & secretaries & Commisioner that are now gone...removed & retired were dirty. PRAISE JESUS...I paid the price as a plumbing contractor because I refused to "Play" nice in their Sandbox. Not showing up after making us wait ALL day, Making you change things that were NOT code violations to punish you. Being extremely verbally abusive to us and Homeowners.Not cool..For example; Port Washington Dormer inspection..plumbing inspector Finally shows up: " Wheres my coffee?? I want bacon and [eggs] too!!!" I never greased an inspector with cash,, but Guess where my helper was goin?? Coffee run.....Glad TONH finally cleaned house. Example 2 Different inspector, North New Hyde Park: "I can't pass you..." Why? Everything is brand new and EXCEEDS code!!! "Yeah..but I want another clean out wye here!!!" But the code is every 50 feet! This is only 30 feet! I don't care, I want another one HERE!."

Appendix I – Inspections Survey Narrative Responses

No.	Constituent Comment
<p align="center">6 (continued)</p>	<p>So, I had to spend 3 hours chopping out the foundation and another 3 hours cutting out and repiping and then retesting 4" PVC pipe... and giving him his extra, unnecessary clean out wye.</p> <p>He made me pay, because I would play...The dirty inspectors probably all talked about me and said I was a Cheap S.O.B. au contraire...I was simply NOT corrupt in any way. I'll buy ya drinks all nite at the Bar, but I ain't greasing you...especially when I'm doing pristine work!</p> <p>[name redacted], Very tough inspector, but super honest and fair. He pisses guys off, even me a few times, but he is BY THE BOOK... Knows his code and trade.</p> <p>[name redacted] & [name redacted] ..Very respectful, knowledgeable understanding reasonable, pleasure to work with.</p> <p>[name redacted]. Very reasonable accommodating knows his code. [name redacted] (Construction) absolute gentleman, super nice and knowledgeable guy...totally honorable, straight shooter!</p>
<p align="center">7</p>	<p>[name redacted] is a difficult person to deal with. Every job the rules change.</p>

Appendix I – Inspections Survey Narrative Responses

Question: Please feel free to provide information about any specific TONH PLUMBING INSPECTION experiences and/or Plumbing Inspectors:	
No.	Constituent Comment
1	Plumbing inspections are usually the ones that sometimes take 2-3 weeks and the response is not that prompt.
2	very Courteous to my staff, Prompt on inspection Times and Very Informative to my Field staff on inspections
3	The Portal has been a major positive experience.
4	plumbing inspector are not allowed to speak to anyone but the plumber is insulting. Having inspector tell me with choice words he doesn't have to speak to me and I'm up hi "a**" [redacted] is beyond reproach. I own the company, pay and hire the owner of plumbing company however he chooses to blatantly with bravado and authority treat both myself and plumber like a low life non extant stay out of my way, with attitude is abominable.
5	North Hempstead continues to be a terrible process for plumbing inspections. You cannot visit the building department to make an inspection and you are not allowed to call for an inspection. You must email only and half the time no one responds. They also don't want duplicate emails which is ironic. If we fail an inspection, we will correct a violation and then they will come up with additional violations instead of giving us all the same violations at the initial inspection. The inspections are constantly rude to us; specifically the females and will require to "only talk to the owner." The only positive we used to have was when we would visit the actual building department and do in person permit intake; the people who worked there were nice and informative like [name redacted], [name redacted], and many others (forgot their name). They were always a pleasure to deal with.
6	Being that I have done work in almost of the unincorporated areas of TONH, I feel that for the most part all of the inspectors perform their duties, in a professional manner
7	[name redacted] makes things for residents extremely difficult and is very unprofessional. He will go into a home and inspect things that do not relate to work being done. He will bully his way into a home even if the inspection being done is outside. Than will issue violations for items that have no bearing on the work done and hold up permits
8	Had no problem with the inspector he was great the rest of the department was terrible what the customer went through to get the permits was a disaster it
9	Every other town on long Island the inspectors and office personal are reasonable. The Town of North Hempstead gives every plumber a hard time, to the point that plumbers charge more to work in the area.

Appendix I – Inspections Survey Narrative Responses

Question: Do you have any suggestions for how the TONH could improve permittees' experiences with inspections through the Building Department?	
No.	Constituent Comment
1	Assign more employees for scheduling and maybe add another inspector or 2 to expedite the inspections
2	ON LINE Permits work great and the inspections are emailed upon completion of inspection very well run..
3	The building department needs to be overhauled as a whole. Building plans and permits must get issued in more timely fashion, the process needs to be more open and transparent. On average a residential building permit gets 4-5 denial letters and takes about a year to get a permit. This is not feasible and terribly unprofessional. We should be able to have direct contact and set up appointments with plans examiners and other building department personal. Speaking of personal many of these employees who work in the Department itself are unprofessional and do not have real world knowledge of the building world. A professional should be brought in as commissioner to overhaul the entire process.
4	Pleasant experience- Other towns should impalement the same portal.
5	Become transparent. Why, in the day and age of instant communication, can't you get a phone call, text, something that links the inspector to the person waiting at the job site. Show up 2 hours late with no communication in the year 2023 is not expectable. Zero accountability to anyone and by the way they are civil servants paid by us.
6	TONH should look into Town of oyster bay or other villages and see how they do work where most other plumbers have no issues doing work and the permit process is much easier. The inspectors in other towns/villages are courteous and offer to help, where TONH it is often looked down upon if we don't know the answer
7	The only exception is the 311 call I understand the need for time in the morning to organize your days work, but if there is a question or a problem to reach out to a particular inspector, its almost impossible
8	Overall timeline to issue Building Permits needs to be greatly improved.
9	Be respectful to your residents that spend a lot of money in taxes a year. It should not take 8-12 weeks in a good day to try and get work completed on your home. It seems like a badge of honor that everything takes so long and is so difficult to get. We have also lost tens or thousands of dollars as residents have canceled jobs because of the long wait time. In conclusion permits need to be approved and scheduled work out not more the 1-2 weeks and if it is an emergency there needs to be a process to expedite
10	Hire people who now what there doing
11	Its much better than it was in the past..For a while no one (Good contractors) wanted to work up there.. They were dirty, corrupt bastards.. You would have to quote much higher in that area because if the runaround and delays you could expect.

Appendix I – Inspections Survey Narrative Responses

Question: Is there anything else you would like to share with regard to your inspection experience(s) with the Town of North Hempstead Building Department?	
No.	Constituent Comment
1	You guys are doing a good job!
2	they are all doing a great Job. incredible Improvement from the past making inspections and permits more efficient.. End result better service to the tax payers and savings to the contractors Time
3	The Plumbing Inspectors we have dealt with have been extremely professional and knowledgeable.
4	Im 61 and been doing this since 1985. When asked on a weekly basis which town is the worst on Long Island including individual townships. TONH Building Department without question is the most difficult, arrogant miserable group of employees I've ever dealt with.
5	The TONH should hire supervisors that occasionally oversee the field inspectors to ensure that everyone is being treated equally or to follow up on permit inspections. Additionally, the inspection appointment process needs to be changed. The inspectors cannot handle making their own appointment.
6	I told you you once I got all permits the inspector was great on another note I will not be renewing my license for this town feel free to contact me I will give you an earful
7	Overall much better in last 10-15 years...It was a runaway train and extremely corrupt at one time. I think its on a good course. Ill part with this...T.O.N.H. inspectors & staff need to remember they work for US and to leave their egos & attitudes at the door. Go after the Illegal Fly By Night Plumbers and contractors with no license no insurance that run around doing work without permits during the day, Nites, weekends when they prowl. They need to stop and approach unmarked vans et cetera that they run across in the street..GO AFTER THEM...not the honest, licensed & insured Professionals trying to do the right thing. WE ARE NOT the enemy!!! Thank you [name and telephone number redacted]

Appendix J – Architects’ Recommendations for Improvement

Note: Below is a list of specific recommendations provided by local architects. Publication herein does not equate to auditors’ agreement with each recommendation.

A local architect submitted to auditors the below recommendations for improvement, which they stated were contributed/compiled from 15 different architects.

TONH, Recommendations for improvements for greater efficiency

1. Then name of “Department of Building Safety, Inspection, Enforcement” is give too much power to one agency. Break up responsibilities. Should just be “Department of Buildings”. The process should more constituent friendly. The inspections and enforcement culture is pervasively forceful.
2. Zoning examination comprise over 60% of total submittal package. Suggest separate zoning examinations. Matters should be distinctly separate from NYS code safety compliance.
3. NYS code safety examination can be done by *any* trained official in New York, therefore could be outsourced to *any* NYS trained official.
4. Whereas local zoning matters of building shape and disposition on the site can be performed by local examiners trained in nuances of each towns preferences.
5. Be more customer oriented. Be available for face to face discussion. (Stop fear/intimidation). Stop the prison wall mentality.
6. The *word* “Omissions” review, is negative. Should be “Review Comments”.
7. Streamline REDUCE quantity of so-called “needed” applications. Quantity has tripled!
8. Ask “why” it’s needed. Reduce or delete 30% of “needed” apps.
9. Conduct random audit/more rigorous reviews on 60% applications, not 100% of applications.
10. Eliminate “back end reviews”. (staff performance review? training? consequences))
11. No second bite at the apple, eg, no additional new comments on second & third reviews.
12. Divide applications into “small jobs” vs “bigger jobs”.
13. Same day walk in approval on simple small requests (eg; patios, bathrooms, fence, AC, Generators, siding, windows, roofing, tool shed.)
14. UNLINK multiple permits to allow smaller jobs to go faster, to not be bogged down to linked jobs.
15. Hire Third Party Reviewers for overflow, and/or, hire more staff at peak times.
16. Insist on one point of Authority, just like in an Architects & Engineers office one professional is responsible, eg, do *not* give individual authority assigned to cases to staff. The principal in charge must sign off (the commissioner) just like principal A&E must do.
17. Hire more licensed Architects & Engineers to do examinations.
18. Eliminate intervention by elected officials. Politicians must not be allowed to pressure the examiners and commissioners. When this occurs everyone get stressed, angry, blamed, and creates defensive counterproductive slower results. Meanwhile the rest of applications suffer when ‘investigations’ or ‘priority’ projects consume staff.
19. Eliminate the 50% renovation rule with regard to renovation projects, especially do *not* require Shut offs of water, gas, elect, rodent, hay bales, fencing, etc. (eg. during demo we WANT water to stay on, elect to stay on in order to do the work, and not lose 3-4 months waiting)
20. Reduce rules about existing roof ridge line, avg mean grade, preexisting nonconformities.

Appendix J – Architects’ Recommendations for Improvement

21. Contractor’s License and insurance process tedious. Must go back and add all the multiple permits must be redone if change of contractors.
22. Field inspectors are unfortunately very personality driven, overly burdensome, overreach.
23. Rotate Field inspectors more. Allow Contractors to rate inspectors quality.
24. Save ONE HOUR of staff time, \$100hr x 5,200year applications = \$520,000year savings.
25. Each day tackle 24 projects (3 staff @eight hours x 8 jobs = 24 jobs)
26. Review submitted plans in teams of Three Persons. Devote *ONE* hour per job, 3 pairs of eyes. Whatever is discovered is all there is! If anything is missed after 3 staff examinations then too bad, you can’t catch it all. Keep it moving.
Maybe random spot check every 20th application more rigorously.
27. No back-end review, keep it moving. Back end is resolved by having three fresh eyes in the beginning, so no need to triple check later. Tackle life safety issues foremost, focus on NYS code compliance. Keep it moving.
28. Separate typing/keyboarding staff to just process letters. Keep examiners examining.
29. Create checkbox simple check lists in lieu of letters. No elaborate, professorial, pseudo lawyer letters, no customized personalized itemized long letters which take multiple days to craft & compose, and which take multiple days for Architects to reply to. It creates too much back n forth correspondence.
30. Allow discussions/conversations prior to the examiners Omissions letter to cut down on misunderstandings, which wastes of time on both sides.
31. Make a separate examination review just for Zoning matters only.
32. Rescind several zoning codes which takes multiple days to review and to verify, and are unnecessarily costly to taxpayers to provide;
For example, these burdensome and unneeded, serve no life safety or community improvement:
 - A. Rescind average mean grade calc requirement for all additions & alterations jobs.
 - B. Building envelope zoning should be from foundation plane, not from cladding plane.
 - C. Eliminate interior ceiling restrictions.
 - D. No need to submit Civil PE site plans for “interior” work.
 - E. Stop requiring so many separate permits for so many separate items.
(OR make easy drive-in same-day issuance for many simple permits, such as fence or sheds, or roofing)
 - F. Rescind max ridge height for pre-existing renovations, should not have to conform if matching existing.
 - G. Incentivize renovations, historical structures.
 - H. Incentivize green & sustainable projects
33. Triage minor zoning infractions by certified/authorized clerks to make administrative approval judgements, eg not have to go to BZA for “two inches” problems. Do not waste time of BZA Board member and constituents.

Appendix J – Architects’ Recommendations for Improvement

34. Hire more staff, work on incentive (reward) for rapid processing. Commission for faster review.
35. Better and mandatory interdepartmental agency cooperation: Highway dept, Fire marshal, Health dept, Water districts, Gas, Elect, Sewer district, DEC.
36. Pledge to review Chamber members or Commercial small business permits in 48hours.
37. Do away with the 50% construction definition new/vs old. If the reason for needing to define new/vs old was to increase profits then make “all same” fees.
38. Renovation projects greater than 50% must not automatiocally be “defined” as *new*. What does this mean for County and State taxation? What is the real reason for this?
39. Charge more for expedited reviews to offset cost.
40. Offer option to pay \$1,500 for expedited applications. Create a “fund” to hire more examiners, or, to host educational seminars to train more tradespersons, or, teach architects or engineers on how to submit correct information the way examiners “want” it.
41. Public meetings with consortium of paid or volunteer trade professionals to “intake” to advise what to do, how to go smoother, to “give you the answers” for what you will need.
42. Offer a pre-approved 10 hour seminar to “certify/reward” A&E to fast-track their projects.
43. NYS Self certify minor portions of jobs.
44. Ask every Town employee to eliminate *one* unnecessary rule or procedure. Incentivize employees to earn \$2500 for every good idea.
45. Why do certain contractors have to be certified to work *in* Town (eg fence installer, sign erector)? Why not create universal county-wide acceptance. Eliminate so many hurdles.
46. NO permits needed for just same for same, eg roofing, siding, or tile, or sheetrock same for same replacement.
47. NO permits needed for just brick veneering, windows replacement, front walkways, etc. (or maybe only “need” permit to collect fees and sign a form same day same approval)
48. Do not ask for THREE separate insurances from contractors. Why make it so hard?

Review civil service levels, make demotions.

No overtime for staff.

Pension should *not* be based on overtime.

Incentivize waste fraud reporting

Appendix J – Architects’ Recommendations for Improvement

According to a local architect, these comments were additional contributions from 2 of the 15 architects who contributed/compiled recommendations for improvement.

1. The Town Board needs to update the allowable uses for the Business districts. The current uses are outdated (black smith, tin smith, tannery) but there is no provision for a tutoring business, for example.
2. The Port Washington Business Overlay District is limited to a few blocks with a handful of storefronts rather than the bulk of Main Street. It even stops before it reaches Port Washington Boulevard.
3. The parking requirements should be reviewed so most of the applicants don’t need parking variances.
4. We should have a quick turnaround on additional info or clarifications needed in the review process. Currently the zoning is reviewed first, and the building code is not addressed until the zoning is completed, then the building code review process needs to be completed before license and insurances and permits addressed. This is convenient for the plan examiners but not the applicants. If these are done simultaneously, months can be saved.
5. We need to change the entire mindset of the DOB. Our residents, property owners and tenants should be treated like customers in a private business.
6. The turnaround time from date of submission has reached a point where some clients would prefer to do the work now and file for a maintain and pay the additional fees because they cannot move into their property without the proposed renovations and cannot financially afford to wait the 6+ months for permits.
7. They should be honest and give applicants a reasonable timeline for approvals. They often say a month or two when in fact it is now 5 months+.
8. The portal does not always update correctly. Often times we are communicating with a plan examiner, yet the portal says that it’s awaiting to be assigned.
9. The Town should have the ability to address minor projects separately from major renovations. A separate examiner dedicated to reviewing minor alterations which do not include any structural modification, change of square footage, etc. would expedite the process greatly. An above ground swimming pool should not take 6 months to review.
10. There is no flexibility when it comes to interpretation of code with the Town. Any deviation from what is black and white automatically gets deferred to BZA for a variance.

Appendix K – Expedite Procedure Town Law §2-10.1

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§ 2-10.1. Procedure on request for expedited permit application review. [Added 5-29-2007 by L.L. No. 6-2007; amended 5-27-2008 by L.L. No. 5-2008; 8-4-2022 by L.L. No. 12-2022]

- A. An applicant may apply, in writing, to the Building Commissioner requesting expedited permit application review, which request shall include such supportive documentation and information as the Building Commissioner may require. The Building Commissioner shall review the request to determine if it meets one or more of the following criteria:
- (1) The request is made to accommodate an urgent or emergency situation which has created a danger to health and/or safety, or to property. The Building Commissioner may conduct a site inspection in accordance with applicable law to verify the urgent or emergency situation; or
 - (2) The request is in furtherance of advancing a public interest such as, but not limited to, job creation and/or economic development; or
 - (3) The request is made in connection with the provision of an essential service, which shall include, but not be limited to, facilities or parts thereof which are connected to the furnishing of medical, governmental, police, fire and/or health and safety services; or
 - (4) The request is made to avoid extreme financial hardship to the applicant, which hardship is not self-created; or
 - (5) The request is related to an application for design modifications and accessibility improvements to facilitate access, safety or independent living or to remove architectural barriers to access for persons with mobility impairments or for people with disabilities at entrances to and within buildings. Some examples of requests satisfying this criteria shall include, but not be limited to, the following: the installation of ramps or kitchen and bathroom renovations for the purposes listed above; or
 - (6) The request is made to address an urgent concern, including, but not limited to, illness, disability, extreme living conditions, death in the family, or a critical need involving the applicant or an immediate family member of the applicant, and the delay in waiting for the application to be processed under ordinary review-time standards would result in a severe detriment to the applicant or the applicant's immediate family member.
- B. The procedure set forth in § 2-10.1A shall not apply to the following:
- (1) Building and plumbing permit applications to maintain construction, changes, alterations, improvements or modifications previously undertaken without the required permit(s).
 - (2) Where it can be reasonably determined by the Building Commissioner that the applicant or someone on the applicant's behalf engaged in conduct that is contrary to the Town Code, New York State Building Code, or other applicable law, or with the intention of not complying with such code or law without first seeking a required approval.
- C. Upon receipt of a request for expedited permit application review, the Building Commissioner and the Planning Commissioner shall review the request, together with the documentation supporting it, and render a written determination within five business days. The Building Commissioner and Planning Commissioner may require additional documentation to support the request. If the two commissioners agree on the determination, the determination shall be the final determination. If the two commissioners do not agree on the determination, the request shall be denied. The Building Commissioner shall notify the applicant of the determination, in writing, within five business days from receipt of the request. The written determination shall become a part of the permanent file

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Appendix K – Expedite Procedure Town Law §2-10.1

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§ 2-10.1
maintained by the Building Department.

§ 2-10.1

- D. Prohibitions. It shall be unlawful for any person or business entity to make false statements or mislead the Building Commissioner in order to secure an expedited review pursuant to the provisions of this chapter, or to fail and/or neglect to inform the Commissioner of a change in the project which would negate eligibility for an expedited review.

:2

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Appendix L – Audit References

- **Town of North Hempstead – Building Department**
<https://www.northhempsteadny.gov/building>
- **Town of North Hempstead – MyToNH Portal**
https://www7.citizenserve.com/Portal/PortalController?Action=showHomePage&ctzPagePrefix=Portal_&installationID=334
- **Town of North Hempstead – Department of Planning and Environmental Protection**
<https://www.northhempsteadny.gov/Planning>
- **Town of North Hempstead – Board of Zoning Appeals**
<https://www.northhempsteadny.gov/bza>
- **Town of North Hempstead – Town Code**
<https://ecode360.com/NO0081>
- **Town of North Hempstead – Board Meetings**
<https://northhempsteadny.gov/2023-Agendas-Minutes>
<https://northhempsteadny.gov/2022-Agendas-Minutes>
<https://northhempsteadny.gov/2021-Agendas-Minutes>
<https://northhempsteadny.gov/2020-Agendas-Minutes>
<https://northhempsteadny.gov/2019-Agendas-Minutes>
- **New York State Department of State – Division of Building Standards and Codes**
<https://dos.ny.gov/building-standards-and-codes>
- **Data.NY.Gov – Uniform Code Annual Report Submissions: Beginning 2007**
<https://data.ny.gov/Government-Finance/Uniform-Code-Annual-Report-Submissions-Beginning-2/kpkx-452i>
- **Town of North Hempstead Request for Proposals for Building Department Software RFP No. TNH 210-2019**
- **Citizenserve Proposal for Town of North Hempstead, NY – Building Department Software – RFP, February 6, 2019**
- **Service Agreement Between the Town of North Hempstead and ONLINE SOLUTIONS, LLC D/B/A CITIZENSERVE**

Appendix M – Audit Methodology

The audit was conducted at the request of the Town of North Hempstead.

Our audit objective was to determine whether the Town of North Hempstead Building Department's permitting process was meeting the needs of constituents. The audit was limited to a review of the permitting process after a risk assessment was completed by the auditors of the various functions of the Building Departments, including the areas of highest concerns to the constituents.

The audit scope focused on the Building Department's operations from January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2022. However, due to the Building Department's transition to Citizenserve, the audit extended into 2023 to review current operations. For some processes, it was necessary for auditors to review years preceding this timeframe for either historical reference or to acquire additional information related to the Building Department's operations.

To achieve the audit objective and obtain valid audit evidence, our audit procedures included the following:

1. Auditors had multiple discussions related to the Town of North Hempstead's implementation of the Citizenserve Online Solutions software with Town Administration, Building Department management and staff, IT Department management, and Citizenserve management/implementation team. Auditors also had discussion with management of a neighboring Town related to the implementation of a new permitting software for their Building Department.
2. Auditors obtained feedback from the IT Department and Building Department to ascertain their assessment of how Citizenserve has met the project objectives and core system functional requirements as specified in the Town's RFP for Building Department Software (RFP No. TNH 210-2019).
3. Auditors had discussions with Town Administration, Building Department management and staff to determine if training for the new Citizenserve Online Solutions software was provided and if said training was sufficient.
4. Auditors obtained and reviewed available written Building Department procedures to determine if formal written procedures existed for all the operations.
5. Auditors had discussions with Building Department staff and performed observations of the day-to-day operations of the Intake, Plans Examination, Permit Pending, Inspections and Back-End Review Divisions to determine if day-to-day operations were being performed in an effective and efficient manner.
6. Auditors observed interactions between the Intake Division staff and constituents to determine the reason for the constituent's visit, the end results of their visit, and conclude whether the applicant could have accomplished their needs digitally, without direct communication with the Building Department through the MyToNH portal.
7. Auditors had discussions with IT Department management and Building Department management related to the 311 Call Center's Service Request concerning Building Department inquiries.

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8. Auditors had discussions regarding status updates and communication methods available in Citizenserve with the Town’s IT Department and Building Department management.
9. Auditors obtained and analyzed all six customer satisfaction surveys received by the Building Department as of January 23, 2023.
10. Auditors selected a random sample of 500 applicants who applied for permits from the Building Department from January 1, 2020, through January 31, 2023, and emailed these applicants a survey to obtain feedback on their experience with the Building Department. The results of the survey were analyzed and quantified to determine applicant satisfaction.
11. Auditors selected a random sample of 500 contractors/plumbers who had inspections performed by the Building Department from January 1, 2020, through January 31, 2023, and emailed these constituents a survey to obtain feedback on their experience with the Building Department. The results of the survey were analyzed and quantified to determine constituent satisfaction.
12. Auditors spoke with design professionals (architects and engineers) who do business with the Building Department to obtain their feedback on their experiences and discuss possibilities for improvement.
13. Auditors spoke with the management and employees of the Building Department to obtain their feedback on the information provided to us by the constituency.
14. Auditors discussed the expedited permit application review process with multiple ToNH Building Department and IT staff to gain an understanding of the process and identify any potential operational weaknesses.
15. Auditors obtained and attempted to analyze data reports received from the Town’s IT and Building Departments for 2019 through 2022 to determine the number of permit applications, permits issued and number of permit applications missing information which required resubmission per year, as well as to determine the timeliness of how long it takes to process a permit application.
16. Auditors had multiple discussions with the Town IT Department to gain an understanding of the data reports received and determine the reliability of these reports.
17. Auditors analyzed and compared 2019 & 2020 data reports from the old AMANDA system provided by the Building Department and 2019 & 2020 data received from the IT Department to determine if the data was consistent and reliable.
18. Auditors had multiple discussions with the Town’s IT and Building Departments management pertaining to the creation, development and status of the Monthly Town Board Reports.
19. Auditors had discussions with Building Staff pertaining to the creation and process of the Weekly Status Reports.
20. Auditors obtained and analyzed the manual Weekly Status Reports which were created and provided by the Building Department to determine the timeliness of permit applications being reviewed by Intake and Plans Examination.
21. Auditors obtained inspection data from Town IT to quantify the number and type of inspections performed by Building Department staff and their associated results. Comptroller’s staff used Microsoft Power BI to create visualizations of this inspection data

Appendix M – Audit Methodology

and provided Building Department management with examples of what their data reporting could look like and how it could be used to impact management oversight of the Building Department.

Samples for audit testing were selected based on professional judgment, as the intent was not to project the testing results onto the entire population. Data regarding the value and/or size of the relevant population and the sample selected for audit testing are specified where applicable.

We believe our review provides a reasonable basis for the findings and recommendations contained herein.