



NASSAU COUNTY COMPTROLLER

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PRESS RELEASE

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The Office of the Nassau County Comptroller Releases Audit of the Town of North Hempstead Building Department

MINEOLA, NY – The Office of Nassau County Comptroller has released its report on an audit of the Town of North Hempstead (TONH) Building Department. Initiated by a request from TONH Supervisor Jennifer DeSena, the audit was focused on the Building Department’s permitting process, the function determined to be of greatest concern to local residents and businesspeople.

Among the major findings of the review are:

- The implementation of a new online portal for Building Department permit applications in 2020 was fraught with significant problems, including failure to utilize key features of the software, CitizenServe Online Solutions, which resulted in frustration and dissatisfaction among both constituents and employees of the Building Department.
- Operational inefficiencies exist within the Department, largely due to lack of standardized procedures and operational oversight.
- Insufficient communication between the Building Department and permit applicants and a lack of transparency have undermined constituent satisfaction with the Department and the Town’s portal, MyToNH.
- The bifurcation of the Town’s government during the audit period had a negative impact on the implementation of the portal.
- Procedures for requests to expedite permit applications lack standardization.

In addition, reporting functionality of the new system was not fully established, impeding the Department’s ability to track permit activity and to identify and remediate process inefficiencies.

“We found significant operational deficiencies and have provided detailed recommendations that can help the Building Department improve efficiency and increase transparency,” said Nassau County Comptroller Elaine Phillips. “In addition, the audit revealed that a cultural shift toward prioritizing constituent service would benefit the Town, its residents and business professionals.”



Through Citizenserve, TONH has access to a comprehensive digital toolkit for modernizing the building permit process both internally (for staff) and externally (for permit applicants). The Town is not fully leveraging the capabilities of the system to improve process flow, facilitate communication, and enable constituents to easily track their permit applications online. More effective use of the platform could improve constituent and employee satisfaction, increase efficiency and transparency, and help the Building Department to standardize processes and implement quality control.

The Comptroller's audit team made it a point to hear from representatives of all parties involved in the building permit process: residents, members of ToNH Administration, commissioners and staff, architects, engineers, and contractors. The team also conducted two Customer Satisfaction Surveys of samples of people who applied for a permit or scheduled an inspection during the scope of the audit.

The full report is accessible in the [Field Audit](#) section of the Comptroller's, or directly at: <https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/DocumentCenter/View/43931/Review-of-TONH-Building-Department-Permitting-Process>.

About the Comptroller's Office

Comptroller Elaine Phillips is the independent protector of the taxpayers and residents of Nassau County. With a population of almost 1.4 million people and an annual budget of approximately \$4 billion, Nassau County relies on Comptroller Phillips and her dedicated staff to monitor Nassau's budget and financial operations, report on matters that affect Nassau's financial health, proactively advocate for operational efficiency on behalf of the taxpayers, and audit government departments and outside agencies that do business with the county to uncover and prevent waste, fraud, and inefficiency. Each year, the Comptroller's Office reviews thousands of contracts, and reviews and approves approximately 140,000 payments. The Comptroller's office also administers payroll and health benefits for the County's 8,000 employees, 12,000 retirees and their dependents for a total of approximately 50,000 covered lives.

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