

Inspectional Services Division Organizational Review RFP No. 10-43

Somerville, Massachusetts

By

Zucker Systems



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November, 2010

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was initiated by the City of Somerville for an organizational and operational review of the City's Inspectional Services Division (ISD). This report includes 101 recommendations for improving the Inspectional Services Division. While all the recommendations are important, we believe there are six key areas or groupings that need the highest priority as follows:

1. ORGANIZATION ISSUES

Findings

In many communities the building permit functions are located in a separate department and the code enforcement and health inspection functions are located in a Health Department. In Somerville these two functions are co-located as the Inspectional Services Division of the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD). We believe this is the proper location for these functions in a city like Somerville. Additionally, joining building permit and plan review with the planning and economic development related functions together meets contemporary management practices. However, because the all of OSPCD functions are not co-located there are communication issues between ISD and the other parts of OSPCD.

Within ISD there are also numerous organizational issues. There is a lack of formal policies and procedures. Most staff have been with the City for many years and tend simply to do things the way they have always been done, rather than develop approaches more in tune with a contemporary organization. There is a strong Union presence within ISD. In spite of this, work tends to get done, but improvements would benefit the City, staff and customers.

There is potential for conflict between ISD and the Planning Division in relation to zoning interpretations. Additionally, more items go to the Board of Appeals than should be necessary.

Recommendations

The report includes a variety of organizational recommendations including:

1. ISD should remain within the OSPCD structure, Recommendation 2.
2. Communication between OSPCD and ISD should be improved, Recommendations 3 and 4.
3. Zoning Ordinance interpretations should be made by the Planning Director, Recommendation 9.

4. The Zoning Ordinance should be modified to remove the need for many Board of Appeal cases, Recommendation 8.
5. An Operation Manager should be appointed for ISD, Recommendation 12.
6. ISD should be reorganized, Recommendation 14.
7. ISD should improve relations with the Union, develop an operations and policy manual and secure additional resources to carry out this study, Recommendations 43, 46, and 47.

2. PROFESSIONALISM

Findings

ISD facilities and offices are in poor condition. Many of the staff tends to lack a professional approach and demeanor in dealing with the public and dress in a non-professional manner. Some customers suggest that good service depends on who you know on staff and, at least in the past, activities may have occurred that presented a potential conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest, at a minimum.

Recommendations

ISD should become more professional by:

1. Adopting a Code of Conduct, Recommendation 15.
2. Implement a dress code, Recommendation 16.
3. Up-grading its facilities, Recommendations 17 to 24.
4. Conducting customer service training, Recommendations 49 and 77.

3. PLAN CHECK

Findings

The ISD plan check function is not well organized and there is no dedicated plan checker. Some plan check timelines are too long and staff simply relies on the 30-day timeline specified in the State Statute. However, for many plan checks this is simply too long and is in conflict with the City's economic and development goals.

Recommendations:

1. Train one or more inspectors in plan check, Recommendation 50.
2. New plan check timeline performance standards are suggested, Recommendation 52.

3. Consultants should be utilized whenever staff cannot meet timelines, Recommendation 55 and 56.

4. INSPECTIONS

Findings

ISD building inspectors perform no more than 8 inspections per day. This is substantially under national standards. Although most inspections are made the day after request, there is no quality control program in place and inspectors basically operate on their own. Needed corrections to properties are largely handled informally without written documentation. Some of the inspectors have poor customer relation skills. Somerville's requirement to periodically inspect four unit and larger multi-family houses is not being met and there are no accurate records as to how many inspections are lacking.

Recommendations

1. ISD inspectors should conduct 12 to 15 inspections per day, Recommendation 69.
2. ISD should adopt an inspection quality control program Recommendations 67.
3. The backlog of multifamily inspections should be corrected, Recommendation 78.
4. Inspectors to use written correction notices, Recommendation 76.
5. Inspectors to receive public relations training, Recommendation 77.

5. CODE ENFORCEMENT

Findings

ISD has a robust code enforcement program that is both needed and appropriate for a city like Somerville. Elected officials are very supportive of code enforcement. The 311 system is working well but could still be improved. There is a concern that more code enforcement is needed on the weekends. The City's required health inspections and restaurant and food establishment inspections are not being met on a timely basis and there is a substantial inspection backlog.

Recommendations

1. Code enforcement processes and technology should be improved, Recommendation 80 and 93.
2. A Code Enforcement Officer should work Saturdays and Sundays, Recommendation 82.

3. All required health inspections should be completed, Recommendations 94 to 100.

6. TECHNOLOGY

Findings

ISD lacks appropriate records and is substantially behind in technology applications. Although we did not uncover any financial issues, there is a clear lack of financial controls. The City has purchased new MUNIS software, which is an excellent start. The national trend for both building inspections and code enforcement is to move to the paperless office. As currently organized, ISD is very paper intensive.

Recommendations

6. MUNIS should include all the features outlined in this report, Recommendation 32.
7. Simple permits should be accepted electronically over the Internet and include the use of credit cards, Recommendations 35 and 37.

II. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

A. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

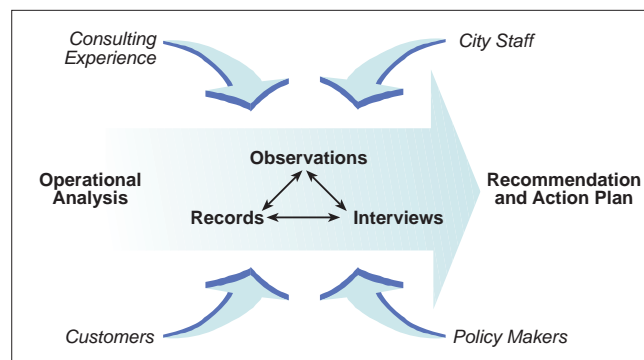
This study was initiated by the City of Somerville for an organizational and operational review of the City's Inspectional Services Division (ISD) within the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD).

The Request for Proposal (RFP) for the study was issued January 6, 2010. Proposals were due January 20, 2010. Zucker Systems was selected for the contract with a contract dated May 17, 2010. Zucker Systems staff spent time in Somerville July 13, 14 and 15 and August 8, 9, and 10.

B. METHODOLOGY

Zucker Systems used a proprietary well-tested, integrated methodology for this study, as shown in Figure 1. We brought our extensive experience to the study, worked closely with City staff, and solicited input and observations from customers and policy makers. The methodology is built on interrelating records, observations, and interviews. Each is necessary for valid studies. National research has shown that each one of these three components—if relied upon exclusively—can be subject to substantial error. For example, record systems are often found to be as high as 50% in error, or the wrong things are measured. We used observations and interviews to verify records. Records and interviews were used to verify observations. Records and observations were used to verify interviews. Each group of people, shown in Figure 1, was an important part of the process.

Figure 1
Methodology Overview



Specific activities conducted for this study included the following:

- Two customer focus groups of thirteen (13) people.
- Interview with Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone.
- Interview with three Aldermen.
- Two hour tour of the City with the Executive Director of OSPCD, Monica Lamboy.
- Group meetings with eleven (11) ISD staff.
- Toured the ISD offices.
- Reviewed various files and records.
- Numerous one-on-one interviews with ISD staff and other relevant City staff.
- Observed the front counter.
- A short questionnaire completed by eleven (11) ISD staff.
- A long questionnaire completed by three (3) ISD staff.
- Ride-along with a two (2) inspectors.

C. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This assessment found many exemplary features within the Inspectional Services Division as well as a number of areas where improvement is possible.

Areas of Strength

Specific strengths include:

- The ISD staff is willing to get their specific jobs done even with only limited resources available.
- City management is committed to improving ISD.
- The Neighborhood Impact Team (NIT) program.

Opportunities for Improvement

Problem areas and opportunities for improvement are described throughout this report. What we consider to be six key areas, or themes, are discussed in the Executive Summary, the first chapter in this report.

Table 1 summarizes the 101 recommendations and opportunities for improvement made throughout this study. To assist the reader, each summarized recommendation is cross-referenced to the page on which the supporting text appears. Although all of these recommendations are important, each was given a priority number in order to help the City with implementation. There are 33 priority number one

recommendations, 61 priority number two recommendations and 7 priority number three recommendations. We assume that existing staff will implement many of the recommendations and the cost, except for new staffing, generally should be absorbed through greater efficiency.

To further help the City and departments in implementation, we have also coded all the recommendations. “Phase One Actions” are recommendations, which we believe should be completed in the first nine months. “Phase Two Actions” we believe should be completed within 18 months.

There are 79 Phase One Action recommendations. As noted above, some of these are given priority 1, 2 or 3. However, that does not mean that only the priority 1 recommendations should be addressed. There are 22 Phase Two Action recommendations. The corresponding departments should develop a detailed implementation plan with time targets for these recommendations.

For each recommendation, we also indicate a responsible party for implementation.

While the above priorities and action schedules should help the City with its implementation plan, it’s essential to initially focus on the six key priorities discussed in the Executive Summary.

Table 1
Table of Recommendations

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
1.	Agree on an implementation plan	Mayor, Executive Director of OSPCD, Superintendent of ISD	11	1	X	
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (OSPCD)						
2.	Retain ISD function within OSPCD	Mayor	15	1	X	
3.	Increase communication between OSPCD and ISD	OSPCD Executive Director	16	1	X	
4.	ISD Management staff to take proactive role in communication process	Superintendent of ISD	16	2	X	
5.	ISD to develop a public outreach program	Superintendent of ISD	17	2	X	
6.	ISD to develop and use a comprehensive email list	Superintendent of ISD	17	2	X	
7.	ISD to have periodic meetings with the development industry	Superintendent of ISD and OSPCD Executive Director	17	2	X	
8.	Modify zoning ordinance to remove need for many Board of Appeal cases	Planning Director	18	1		X
9.	Zoning ordinance interpretations to be made by Planning Director	OSPCD Executive Director	18	1		X
10.	In short term ISD staff to continue making zoning ordinance interpretations	OSPCD Executive Director	19	2	X	

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
11.	Clarify process for Board of Appeals	OSPCD Executive Director	19	2		
12.	Add an Operations Manager to ISD staff	Mayor	22	1	X	
13.	Electrical inspectors to report directly to ISD Superintendent	Mayor and DPW Commissioner	22	2	X	
14.	Reorganize ISD	Mayor and ISD Superintendent	23	1		
ISSUES RELATED TO ENTIRE INSPECTIONAL SERVICES DIVISION (ISD)						
15.	Adopt draft ISD Code of Conduct	ISD Superintendent	24	1	X	
16.	Division to implement dress code for ISD staff	ISD Superintendent	24	1	X	
Facilities and Equipment						
17.	Upgrade ISD restrooms to meet ADA regulations	Mayor and ISD Superintendent	27	2	X	
18.	Update ISD staff and public entrance doors to meet ADA regulations	Mayor and ISD Superintendent	27	2		X
19.	Hire janitorial service for daily cleaning of ISD offices	Mayor and ISD Superintendent	27	2	X	
20.	Improve ISD directional signs for the public	ISD Superintendent	27	2	X	
21.	ISD staff to clean up individual office and desk areas	ISD Superintendent	27	2	X	
22.	ISD to be open to public from 8am to 4pm	ISD Superintendent	27	2	X	
23.	Upgrade ISD office facilities	Mayor and ISD Superintendent	27	2		X
24.	Consider co-locating all OSPCD related functions	Mayor	27	3		X
Financial Issues						
25.	Implement nine of the 10 recommendations in March 29 Internal Auditor Report	ISD Superintendent	28	2	X	
26.	Modify fee calculation methods	ISD Superintendent	29	3		X
27.	Examine ISD revenue accounts to increase revenue	ISD Superintendent	29	2	X	
Handouts and Forms						
28.	Develop official ISD handouts	ISD Superintendent	30	2	X	
29.	Locate handouts at ISD public counter	ISD Superintendent	30	2	X	
30.	Place handouts on City's web page	ISD Superintendent	31	2	X	
31.	Publish available handouts in newspaper	ISD Superintendent	31	2		X
Technology						
32.	Program MUNIS to include features as outlined	IT Department	33	1		X
33.	Purchase field computers for ISD field staff	Mayor and ISD Superintendent	33	2		X
34.	Purchase plan check software and 40 inch monitor	Mayor and ISD Superintendent	33	3		X
35.	Allow simple permits over the Internet	IT Department and ISD Superintendent	33	1	X	
36.	Accept credit card payments	Finance Department and ISD Superintendent	33	1	X	
37.	Accept credit cards over the Internet	Finance Department and ISD	33	1		X

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
		Superintendent				
38.	Review inspection results online	IT Department and ISD Superintendent	34	2		X
39.	City website should include an alpha index	Communications Department	34	2		X
40.	ISD website to clarify ISD address	ISD Superintendent	34	3	X	
41.	Expand ISD website to include additional features	ISD Superintendent	35	2		
Other Issues						
42.	Increase ISD training budget by \$15,000	Mayor	35	2	X	
43.	ISD to develop productive working relation with the Union	ISD Superintendent	36	1		
BUILDING UNIT						
Codes and Authority						
44.	Adopt ICC existing building codes for older structures	Board of Alderman (BOA)	37	2		X
45.	Adopt 2009 versions of the ICC codes	City Attorney and Alderman	37	2		X
Other Topics						
46.	Develop a ISD policy manual	ISD Superintendent	38	1	X	
47.	Appropriate additional resources to implement this study	Mayor	42	1	X	
48.	Streamline signature process for demolition permits	ISD Superintendent	42	2	X	
49.	ISD staff to be trained in customer service for the public	HR Department	42	1	X	
50.	ISD to check by computer if applicant's taxes are paid	IT Department and ISD Superintendent	42	2	X	
Plan Check						
51.	Train one or more inspectors in plan check	ISD Superintendent	43	1	X	
52.	Revise building plan check times as shown in Table 11	ISD Superintendent	45	1	X	
53.	Provide cross training for structural and mechanical aspects of plan review	ISD Superintendent	45	2		X
54.	Provide cross training for plumbing, fuel gas and for electrical provisions of plan review	ISD Superintendent	45	2		X
55.	Use consultants to meet plan check performance standards	ISD Superintendent	45	1	X	
56.	Hire two consulting firms to assist with peak plan check loads	Mayor and ISD Superintendent	45	1	X	
57.	Assign Building Supervisor as main point of contact for consulting firms	ISD Superintendent	46	2	X	
58.	Empower ISD staff member to assign to consultant to resolve issues	ISD Superintendent	46	2	X	
59.	Add detail specifications to RFP for consultants	ISD Superintendent	46	2	X	
60.	Speed up scanning of building plans	ISD Superintendent	48	2	X	
61.	Require computer disks for all new plans	ISD Superintendent	48	2	X	
62.	Develop new plan review filing system	ISD Superintendent	48	2	X	

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
63.	Develop plan review system for old plans and plans that have been completed	ISD Superintendent	48	3		X
Inspections						
64.	Complete 90% of inspections called in by 4pm the next day	ISD Superintendent	49	1	X	
65.	Individual inspection areas should be developed for inspectors	ISD Superintendent	49	2	X	
66.	Inspection area should be rotated twice a year	ISD Superintendent	50	2	X	
67.	Senior Building Inspector to ride with each inspector twice a year	ISD Superintendent	50	1		
68.	Required office hours for building inspectors from 8am to 9am only	ISD Superintendent	50	2	X	
69.	Each building inspector to do 12 to 15 inspections per day	ISD Superintendent	51	1	X	
70.	Retrain clerical staff or hire permit techs to issue permits	ISD Superintendent	51	2		X
71.	Split construction inspection requests evenly between four building inspectors	ISD Superintendent	52	2	X	
72.	Develop comprehensive daily inspection log	ISD Superintendent	52	2	X	
73.	Set break and lunch schedule for ISD staff	ISD Superintendent	52	2		
74.	Require older permits to receive final inspection	ISD Superintendent	52	3		X
75.	Each inspector to check two older permits per day	ISD Superintendent	52	2	X	
76.	Inspectors should use written correction notices	ISD Superintendent	53	1	X	
77.	Inspectors should receive public relations training	HR Department	53	1	X	
78.	Bring multi-family dwelling inspections up to date	ISD Superintendent	54	1	X	
79.	ISD staff to answer phone messages and email messages on a daily basis	ISD Superintendent	54	2	X	
HEALTH UNIT						
80.	Code Enforcement Officers to input data into the computer	Chief Code Enforcement Officer	55	1	X	
81.	Establish office hours for staff to be available for the public	ISD Superintendent	56	2	X	
82.	Code Enforcement Officer to work on Saturdays and Sundays	ISD Superintendent	56	1	X	
83.	Review Code Enforcement Process and Hearing Office Appeal process as part of MUNIS	ISD Superintendent	58	2		
84.	Provide proper training for crime scene response and cleanup	Chief Code Enforcement Officer	59	2	X	
85.	Provide proper cleanup tools and equipment for crime scene cleanup	Mayor and ISD Superintendent	59	2	X	
86.	Consider contracting crime scene cleanup to outside firm	Mayor	59	3		X
87.	Review or adopt internal phone policies	ISD Superintendent	60	2		
88.	All code complaints to remain confidential	ISD Superintendent	60	2		
89.	Provide proper tools for the code enforcement officers	Mayor	60	2	X	
311 Complaint System						

#	Recommendation	Responsibility	Page	Priority	Phase One Actions	Phase Two Actions
90.	Provide additional training for 311 operators	Director of Constituent Services	61	2	X	
91.	Staff to follow 311 procedures	Chief Code Enforcement Officer	61	2	X	
92.	Elected officials to follow 311 system	Mayor and Alderman	61	2	X	
93.	Close out cases on the 311 system	Chief Code Enforcement Officer	61	1	X	
Food Safety Inspections						
94.	Cross train staff and/or hire 2 full time health inspectors	Mayor	63	1	X	
95.	Inspect food establishments two time per year	Health Inspector	63	2	X	
96.	Inspect ice cream machines annually	Health Inspector	63	2	X	
97.	Review all temporary permits for health inspections	Health Inspector	63	2	X	
98.	Inspect all mobile food vendors	Health Inspector	63	2	X	
99.	Hire consultants for health inspection backlog	Mayor and ISD Superintendent	63	1	X	
100.	Provide Health Inspector citation authority	Mayor, BOA, and ISD Superintendent	63	1		X
Employees						
101.	Discuss employee questionnaire questions 4, 6 and 17 in staff meeting	ISD Superintendent	78	2	X	

Before the City begins implementing this study, we suggest that it take the following action.

1. Recommendation: The Mayor, the Executive Director of OSPCD and the Superintendent of the Inspectional Services Division should review the study and agree on an implementation plan, which should include:

- An agreed-upon timetable and work program
- Cost estimates and method of funding
- Confirmation by the Board of Aldermen

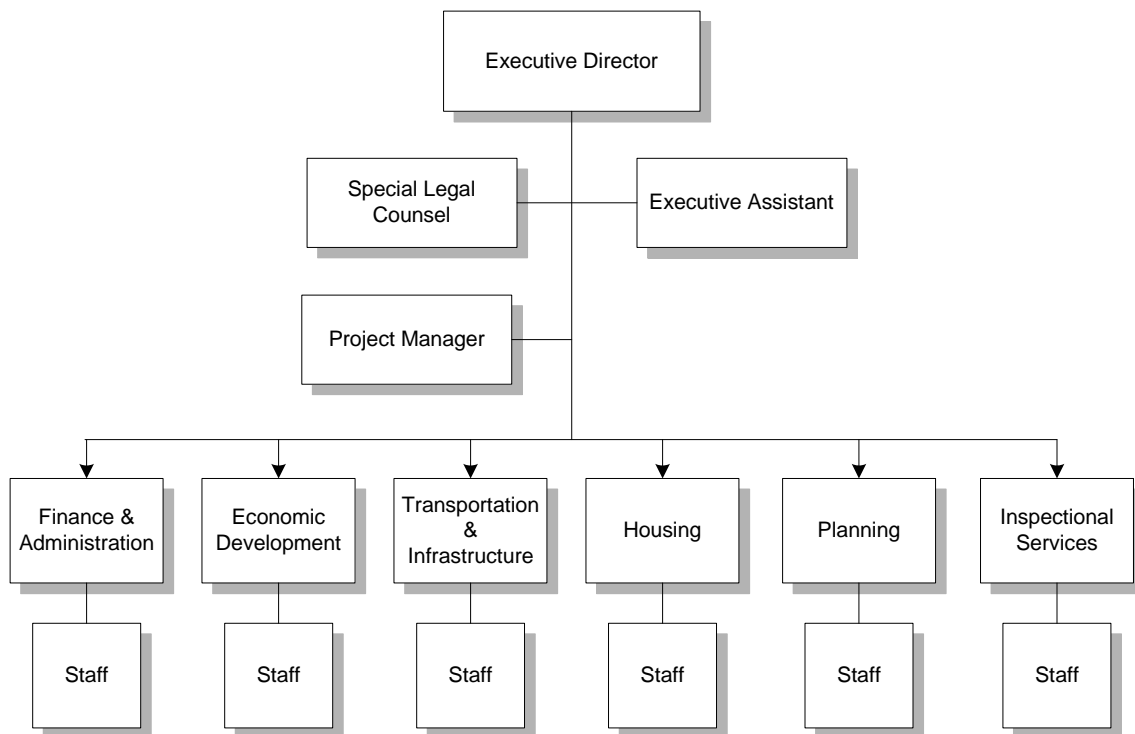
The Inspectional Services Division already has many important tasks they are undertaking and may find the 101 recommendations overwhelming. However, as improvements take place and staff becomes empowered to change, the City may be surprised at how fast implementation can occur.

III. OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (OSPCD)

A. OVERVIEW

The Inspectional Services Division is one of six divisions included in the OSPCD department. The ISD function was removed from Public Works in 2004. The functions are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2
OSPCD Organization



B. ISD MISSION AND GOALS

The ISD Program Description as stated in the FY11 Goals Exercise Template is as follows:

Inspections: Protect the public health and safety through judicious, customer friendly enforcement of city, state, and federal codes and ordinances.

Highlights from this document for ISD include:

- Implement MUNIS module for permitting and code enforcement
- Provide clear, accurate and easily understood information on the City website and in other public info materials
- Standardized policies and procedures for permit issuance
- Perform pre-scheduled inspections in a timely manner
- Meet weekly with NIT to review and inspect properties needing multi-departmental attention
- Prepare and implement a rodent abatement action plan
- Ensure that all food establishments are inspected twice a year
- Closely monitor revenues and ensure that all fees for licenses and permits are accurately and promptly collected

C. FUNCTIONAL GROUPS

We did not do a review of OSPCD. However, based on our numerous studies in many cities, we believe that for a city the size of Somerville, it is appropriate to have these functions within one department. Normally the function work best when co-located within one building. Unfortunately in Somerville the Housing and Inspectional Services Divisions are not in City Hall. In our interviews, a number of alternative organizational patterns related to ISD were suggested. These are discussed below.

Separate Department

Some suggested that ISD should be a separate department. We believe it is too small to be its own department. However, more importantly, we like to see Planning and Inspections, and Code Enforcement in the same department. Properly integrated there are many advantages including zoning interpretations, plan check integration, inspection integration and an integrated Certificate of Occupancy process. Many small and medium sized communities combine these three functions. This is particularly true in states like California but may be less so in states like Massachusetts. This combination is less the case in large cities. We recently surveyed the 50 largest U.S. cities and found the planning and building functions combined in 38% of these cities.

Return ISD to the Public Works Department

There are a variety of interfaces between the ISD function and the Public Works function such as water, sewer, electrical and engineering. However, we believe these ties are less important than the ties to OSPCD functions. In high growth, green field,

type communities, the need to integrate with Public Works functions is greater. In many of these communities we find ISD, Planning and Engineering located within one department and also collocated. However, Somerville is a relatively built out community and the ties to Public Works are less predominant. This is not to say that ISD function and Public Works should not be well integrated and coordinated. We only believe that they need not be in the same department.

As another point, some have suggested that Public Works would be a better organization to supervise ISD than is OSPCD. We believe that either organization should be capable of that supervision. We do note that many of the problems we have discovered in ISD were also present when it was part of Public Works.

Separate Health Inspectors and Building Inspectors

Some have suggested that the Health Inspectors (Code Enforcement) should return to the Health Department. However, we see many synergistic possibilities by having the building inspection and code inspection functions within the same department. There is an obvious relation for certain new construction such as restaurants. Additionally, there can be easy referrals between ISD's building inspection functions and the health code enforcement functions. As such, we believe the current organizational pattern is preferable.

Conflicts between ISD and OSPCD

There are a number of current activities that strengthen the relation between OSPCD and ISD including the Mayor's newsletter and retreat, annual retreats, annual holiday party and the OSPCD Director at the ISD office once a week. However, there is still a need to strengthen the relations between ISD and OSPCD. The lack of co-location hinders the relationships. ISD employees often feel like second class citizens within the OSPCD function. Better communication as well as ISD seeing the broader OSPCD mission is essential. The goal should be to strengthen the relations. ISD needs to see how they are an integral part of the Mayor and OSPCD's goal of continuous improvement of Somerville.

Summary

Although any of the alternatives discussed above could be made to work, we believe the current structure of having ISD within OSPCD is preferable.

2. Recommendation: Retain the ISD function within the OSPCD organization.

D. ISSUES

Communication

Many staff in the Inspectional Services Division feel that they are considered second-class citizens, and that the inspectional function as a whole is considered as among the least important municipal services. Although this issue relates to OSPCD, it also likely pre-dates ISD being in OSPCD and may be a long-standing perspective. As one staff member indicated, “If someone in the City receives a new computer, we get the old one.” “If someone gets new furniture, we get the old one.” We can’t document this. However, the resulting perspective impacts the productivity of ISD and is an issue that needs to be addressed. Elsewhere in this report we discuss some of the facility and equipment needs for ISD.

There are a variety of communication issues between the City policy makers and ISD staff. On the one hand, ISD staff feels that they are not adequately consulted with regard to city policy direction. On the other hand, we believe ISD staff could take a more proactive role in anticipating policy direction for the city. Additional leadership roles are also not defined and no one appears to volunteer to take the lead for problem solving or to implement changes for the betterment of the department and the city.

Related to this issue is the need for improved communication between the OSPCD functions and ISD. The OSPCD Executive Director needs to take the lead in closing these communication and perception issues. ISD is an important part of OSPCD achieving its overall goals and this perspective needs to be communicated.

3. *Recommendation:* OSPCD and the Executive Director should increase communication with ISD and reinforce the importance of the ISD function.

Although most of the permit and inspection related functions are located within ISD (with some located in Public Works and Fire), there are still major communication issues between functions. Some of this is due to having functions located on different and separate floors of the building and having other development related functions located at City Hall. Others communication issues are created as staff does a good job working on their specific issues without adequate recognition of the impact on other functions. This is often referred to as the “silo” effect. Additionally, no one is designated to coordinate the entire development process.

4. *Recommendation:* ISD management staff should take a pro-active role in the internal (to the City) communication process.

ISD does not currently perform a lot of public outreach on the different programs that are available for the public and about what is being developed in ISD. There are many programs, processes and functions that are either provided and/or offered by the ISD. For the most part the public is not aware of everything ISD does and the programs that might be of some assistance to them.

- 5. *Recommendation:* ISD should develop an outreach program designed to inform the development community and the public of all the programs that are available to them and to inform the public about all the services that ISD can perform for them.**

Most building departments have also found it useful to have a continuous dialogue with the development community. One way to do this is to develop a comprehensive email list of all professionals and builders working in the city. Periodic meeting with industry representatives can also be helpful.

- 6. *Recommendation:* ISD should develop a comprehensive email list of everyone they do business with and use this as a communication device.**
- 7. *Recommendation:* ISD should periodically have meetings with industry representatives.**

Non-conforming Zoning

The Somerville Zoning Ordinance results in a large percentage of Somerville properties being non-conforming. When this happens, properties need to go before the Board of Appeals which can add six to eight weeks to the process. It was suggested to us that this approach is intentional as it gives the City design review in a sense through the back door. We understand that the City intends to begin a re-write of the Zoning Ordinance in the next year or so and this could include a residential design review process. In addition, there may be other options that could reduce the timelines and simplify the process.

One of the communities we worked with developed what was called, “the lot development option.” Under this provision the Planning Director could modify any aspect of the Zoning Ordinance up to 15%. The process was very simple, established a list of design criteria to be considered, and applications could be processed in one weeks time.

Another approach we have used is to examine Board of Appeals cases. We assess whether the same types of cases appear over and over, and whether the conditions of approval are similar in these cases? If so, a few simple modifications of the Ordinance

can substantially streamline the process. The Planning Director could also still have a form of discretionary review, subject to appeal to the Board of Appeals.

8. *Recommendation:* The City should consider modifications to the Zoning Ordinance to streamline the development process and remove the need for numerous Board of Appeals cases.

Zoning Interpretation

Massachusetts' law indicates that ISD commissioners (in Somerville's case, the ISD Superintendent) have been given zoning interpretation authority. Since the Zoning Ordinance is prepared by the Planning Division, they often believe they are in a better position to interpret the Ordinance than ISD. Currently each building inspector tends to interpret the Zoning Ordinance on their own. Unfortunately the Somerville Zoning Ordinance is vague and relies on considerable interpretation. In one case before the Somerville Board of Appeals, two OSPCD divisions were actually taking different sides as related to how to interpret the Ordinance. This is obviously counter-productive and can leave applicants in a difficult position.

This is not only a Somerville issue but is evidently a state-wide issue. Legislation is pending that would give the local jurisdiction the ability to allow planners to make these decisions.

The national approach is that the Planning Director is normally given the interpretation authority, generally with an appeal right to a Board of Appeals or Planning Commission. A common approach used in many communities is that a planner first reviews an application to determine its zoning compliance and then the building permit is processed. To make this work well, the planners are generally co-located with the building staff and determinations are either made at the counter or within no more than one day delay. Some communities have trained building staff to make initial determinations with only problem or unusual cases requiring the planner's attention.

For Somerville, lacking co-location of staff, we suggest ISD staff be trained to continue to make the zoning interpretations but consult with the OSPCD Planners when interpretations are in doubt. The Planning Director and the Senior Planner meet with the Senior Building Official once a week. This is an excellent process and should be continued.

9. *Recommendation:* Should state law change concerning Zoning Ordinance interpretations, the Planning Director should be given interpretation authority.

10. *Recommendation:* ISD staff should continue to make initial Zoning Ordinance interpretations, consulting the Planning Director on problem or unusual cases.

There has been some confusion as to the requirement that a building permit must be applied for before a denial letter is issued that then creates an appeal to the Board of Appeal. This process is counter-productive since it is not reasonable to have an applicant prepare building plans that might be changed following a Board of Appeals hearing. Further, the requirement is not included in either state or local law and appears to be a process developed internally by ISD. Planning staff now accept permit applications without a denial letter, but some applicants continue to submit materials for a denial letter. We suggest that the denial letter process can be eliminated.

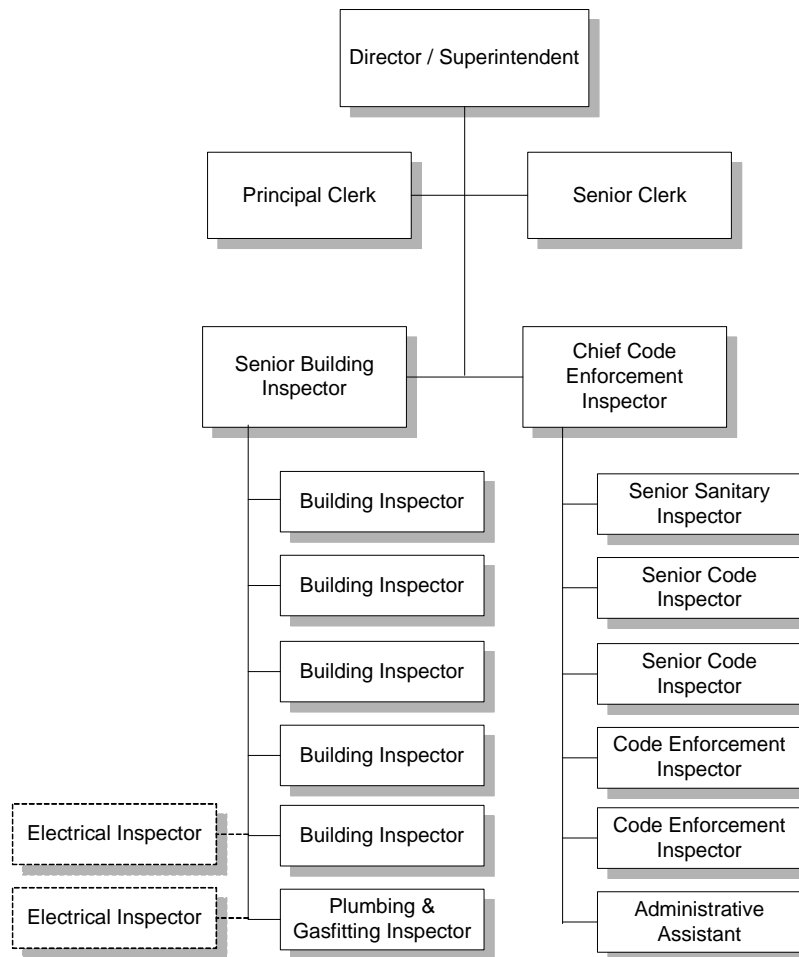
11. *Recommendation:* The process for actions that establish the requirement for an appeal to the Board of Appeals or other type of special permit should be clarified.

IV. ISSUES RELATED TO ENTIRE INSPECTIONAL SERVICES DIVISION (ISD)

A. ORGANIZATION

ISD consists of 17 positions as shown in Figure 3. Staff is organized in three units. Two clerks report directly to the Superintendent. A Senior Building Official supervises six Inspectors in a Building Unit. This Building Unit also handles building enforcement. Two Electrical Inspectors operating out of Public Works conduct electrical plan check and inspection. A Chief Code Enforcement Inspector supervises six staff for the Health Unit. A staff member from SomerStat has also been working roughly 75% time within ISD,

Figure 3
ISD Organization Chart



Every week there is a one hour meeting at ISD to coordinate activities. The meeting is attended by the Mayor, the Mayor's Chief of Staff, the OSPCD Executive Director, the ISD Superintendent, the Director of SomerStat, and the SomerStat Senior Analyst that has been assigned part time to ISD. The Senior Analyst sets the agenda. This is an excellent approach which we highly endorse.

There are several changes that we believe could strengthen the ISD organization including:

- We believe the Division needs a non-union Operation Manager. This position would help to implement the recommendation of this report, implement MUNIS, and help the Division transition to a more modern and automated function. A staff person from SomerStat has more or less been filling at least part of this role and we see this continuing on an expanded full time basis. This position would report directly to the Superintendent and also supervise the clerks.

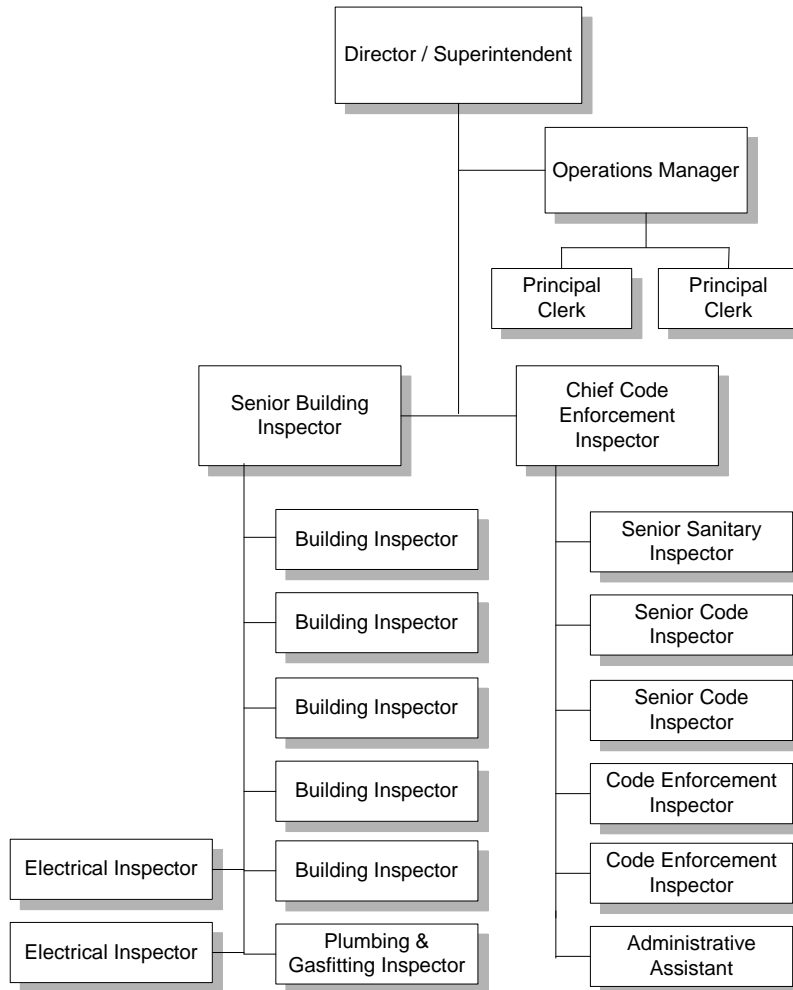
12. *Recommendation:* Add an Operations Manager to the ISD staff.

- Two Electrical Inspectors report to the DPW Superintendent of Highways, Lights and Lines rather than to the ISD Superintendent. The DPW has three other electrical inspectors on staff that perform electrical inspections for the streetlights and stop lights. The two electrical inspectors assigned to work with and out of (in terms of the location) the ISD office also will respond for inspections for street lights and for stop light signals on an as needed basis. However, the vast majority of their work is directly related to building electrical inspections and plan check functions.

13. *Recommendation:* The Mayor and DPW Commissioner should re-assign the two (2) electrical inspectors to report to ISD rather than to DPW since the majority of their work load is directly related to the building inspection and plan check functions.

The proposed ISD organization is shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4
Proposed ISD Organization**



14. Recommendation: Re-organize ISD as shown in Figure 4.

B. CODE OF CONDUCT

Some of the Health Unit and the Building Unit staff will regularly come into the office, work the front counter, and perform inspections as well as respond to complaints wearing T-Shirts, old pants and/or torn jeans. There is no established dress code for the Division. Again the initial first appearance of the staff can either help to provide for a good first impression or for a bad one.

ISD does not have a written policy manual nor a code of conduct policy. Since all employees belong to a Union, the Union contract applies rather than any other City personnel policies. However, last year the Chief Labor Counsel drafted an Inspectors’

Code of Conduct memorandum which was distributed to the HR/Personnel Dept., Mayor's Office, ISD Inspectors, Fire Department Inspectors, and DPW Inspectors. Amongst other items, the draft Code of Conduct/internal policy manual should include the following:

- No employee shall advise applicants on which contractors, architects or related professional they would suggest be hired for the application or project.
- A dress code should also be established since often times the Code Enforcement Officers and the Building Inspectors will come to work wearing T-Shirts and torn pants.

15. *Recommendation:* The City should adopt and implement an ISD “Code of Conduct.”

16. *Recommendation:* ISD should develop and implement a dress code for all the ISD staff.

C. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Broken Window Theory

A commonly accepted theory is that broken windows that are not quickly fixed lead to more broken windows. Additionally, Tom Peters, one of the most recognized and popular international management consultants makes the case about the importance of small things and appearances in office. One of his lines in his new book, *The Little Big Things* is “even accounting offices, were judged as much or more on appearance as on substance.” These issues not only impact customers but also the morale and productivity of staff. The ISD offices are in need of modernization.

Professionalism

Management staff at the City has expressed their desire and hopes to improve upon the professionalism of the ISD Division. In order to accomplish this it is often necessary to start with basic items, such as the appearance of the office and the appearance of the staff, attitude of the staff, outreach of the staff, mannerism of the staff, office usability for the development community and the public, accessibility issues and overall presentation.

Currently the ISD Division is housed in an older building that is cramped for space, is in need of some repairs and does not meet any accessibility requirements as outlined in Title II and Title III of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). There is no ADA access to the building for either the staff or the public. Additionally there are no

accessible restrooms for anyone who has a disability. If someone comes into the office that is in a wheel chair or is otherwise physically challenged he or she must be assisted outside in the parking lot, that is if he or she can even make someone in the Division see that they are outside seeking assistance.

The front counter areas are not clean, are generally unorganized, and are not designed to assist the public. The inspectors and clerical staff desk areas and filing areas are in disarray and documents are piled everywhere. The public waiting areas, the stairs, the entrance, the hall ways, the restrooms, and the office areas are all dusty, dirty, and have not been adequately cleaned. There are dirt and spider webs everywhere. The entire staff is using a wide variety of different desks and chairs that appear to be leftovers from other department's' unwanted furniture. The public waiting areas on both floors are dusty and for the most part located in the hallways. Appearance can lead to either a good or bad first impression by the public and the development community.

To produce a more professional organization the City should consider starting with some basic items.

Figure 6
Crowded Office Facilities



Figure 7
Poor Building Access



Figure 8
Poor Signage



- 17. *Recommendation:*** The City and ISD should upgrading the existing restrooms to meet the required ADA regulations.
- 18. *Recommendation:*** The City and ISD should update all the staff and public entrance doors for compliance to the required ADA regulations.
- 19. *Recommendation:*** The City and ISD should hire a janitorial service for daily cleaning of the offices and of the public waiting areas and the restrooms.
- 20. *Recommendation:*** ISD should improve the directional signs for the public.
- 21. *Recommendation:*** ISD should direct all the staff to clean up their individual office and desk areas to provide for a more professional appearance for the public.

ISD has been closed parts of the day to accommodate inspection schedules. However, it should be feasible to arrange schedule to expand the hours of office operation.

- 22. *Recommendation:*** ISD should be open to the public and for the development community all day every working day from 8:00 AM till 4:00 PM.
- 23. *Recommendation:*** The City should upgrade the ISD office facilities.

Co-location

The current national trend is to co-locate all functions that address planning and development applications in one building, the so called “one-stop approach.” This saves both time and frustration for the customers since they don’t have to visit multiple offices, and also allows a smoother internal coordination process where staff’s have easier access to each other with improved communication. Co-location would be particularly useful for the OSPCD functions. A collocation study is outside the scope of this current study. However, it is our understanding that the City is undertaking a municipal facilities study and we strongly recommend co-location of all OSPCD functions, as well as the fire plan review and inspection functions.

- 24. *Recommendation:*** Somerville should co-locate all development related functions, should the opportunity arise in the future.

D. FINANCIAL ISSUES

Controls

The Somerville Internal Auditor completed an internal review of ISD in early 2010 which identified a variety of internal financial control issues. Some of these could lead to the inappropriate allocation or collection of funds. Since MUNIS will resolve a number of the issues raised, the Internal Auditor has completed a second list dated March 29, 2010 that includes 10 items for more immediate action. We concur with nine of these items which should be corrected as soon as possible.

One suggestion was: “Going forward, ISD management will ensure that all permits are ordered pre-numbered.” Since the MUNIS system will automatically generate permit numbers, this recommendation may not be needed, unless ISD needs to order permit forms before MUNIS is in operation.

25. *Recommendation:* Nine of the ten recommendations in the March 29, 2010 Internal Auditor report should be implemented.

Fees

Most of the Somerville building permit fees are based on building valuation. This method has traditionally been used throughout the United States and is still used in many communities. The Attorney General in California has called these fees into question since there is no sound nexus between the cost of construction and the cost for plan check and inspection. For example, the plan check and inspection costs for a kitchen are similar for a \$15,000 kitchen or a \$30,000 kitchen. Many California communities are now moving to calculating actual costs for plan check and inspection, often relying on fixed costs along with some square footage costs.

In the long term, Somerville may want to look at different methods for setting fees. However, in the short term, some changes to the current system may be in order including:

- The current system of requesting construction cost estimates and copies of contracts is useful. However, we see no need to have these notarized since the notary has no knowledge of construction costs. While the notary will also indicate that the applicant is the same person whose name is on the application, it is unlikely that someone not authorized to apply for a permit would do so.
- The applicants’ estimates should be supplemented by calculations made by the ISD staff. These calculations can be made using readily available cost tables based on square foot costs for the Somerville area.

The Internal Auditor indicated a concern that undervaluing or overvaluing the cost of construction could impact the assessment for taxes. We discussed this with the Assessor and believe this not to be the case. Although the cost of construction data is shared with the Assessor, this is only one, and not the most important one, of many factors that actually go into the assessment.

26. *Recommendation:* Modify the fee calculation methods as outlined above.

The focus group suggested that Somerville fees are some of the highest in the State. However, data that SomerStat furnished from its “Mass Stat” network (now called “StatNet”) indicated that there are more complaints from developers on customer service rather than on permit fees. That has also been our experience nationally. The history is that fees go up, but service remains the same. Many developers are more than willing to pay increased fees if timelines can be substantially shortened. Our analysis in Chapter V indicates that in some categories Somerville fees are higher than other communities but for some categories they are lower.

Revenue

The primary functions of ISD that are directly tied to revenue relate to building permit review and inspection; licensing of food establishments, dumpsters, certain types of businesses subject to health code provisions; and enforcement of building and health codes and ordinances, including regulations for trash and snow shoveling. The Somerville Code of Ordinances Section 1-11 lists 51 fines or activities that involve ISD.

There are a variety of issues that could impact revenue figures. These include:

- The 26 unaccounted-for permits listed in the Internal Auditor report
- Additional restaurant reviews which could be remedied by additional staffing
- Uncollected tickets
- As indicated in the Benchmarking chapter, some Somerville building permit fees are less than surrounding communities.

It should also be noted that as far as developers are concerned, they are more concerned with shortening the plan check times and consistency of reviews than they are with the application fees. Our experience elsewhere is that this can be used as a source of needed revenue.

27. *Recommendation:* ISD should examine all its revenue accounts to increase revenue.

Enterprise Funds

Many communities have established enterprise type funds for the building permit and inspection process. This allows the ability to use any excess revenue for technology, improvement to the processes, and building a reserve account to cover expenses in any downturn of activity. We generally recommend that the reserve account be built over a period of years and be capped at roughly the same amount as the annual budget for the building permit and inspection activity. The City may wish to consider the use of such a fund in the future.

E. HANDOUTS AND FORMS

ISD has very few handouts for the public. We suggest:

The City's Building Unit currently has only about five (5) handouts available for the public to utilize. These handouts are very general in nature and do not have any identifying marks, City logos or anything else that would indicate to the public that these handouts are official and issued by the City of Somerville and are approved for use. Some of the handouts are copies of adopted code sections and some of the handouts are drawings. These handouts are also not displayed at the public counter and are not readily available for the public's use. The public is generally not aware that the handouts exist. None of the handouts are on the City's web page. The majority of the handouts are either kept in a file cabinet or in a small display holder back in the offices. In order to obtain a copy of a handout the public must ask the correct questions of staff before they will be made aware that a handout even exists.

Many of the ISD forms will need to be revised to reflect the needs of MUNIS. We also note that the current forms do not include a space to record email addresses. Given today's modes of communication, it is essential that ISD create a major data base of email addresses to be used for customer surveys and to alert customers to any pending ordinance or policy changes.

28. *Recommendation:* ISD should develop new official handouts, containing the City's logo. At a minimum, five new handouts per month should be generated until there is a sufficient amount to serve the needs of the public. Many Cities will have as many as 50 or more different handouts available for general use by the public.

29. *Recommendation:* ISD should locate the public handouts at the front of the public counter and make these handouts available for use by the general public. The new location should be well marked and advertised to let the public know that these handouts are available for their use.

30. Recommendation: Make sure all handouts are available for the public on the City's web page.

31. Recommendation: Take an ad out in the local newspaper to inform the public that the City has several ISD handouts available to the public that can assist them with their individual construction projects and that can help them through the permit process.

F. STAFFING

Years of Employment

ISD has had a relatively stable staff with average employment tenure of 16.4 years and a median of 18 years.

Productive Hours

Because of the numerous changes that will take place within ISD as recommendations from this report and MUNIS are implemented, it would be counterproductive to undertake a standard staffing study at this time. However, it is always useful to examine the amount of staff time actually available as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Available Productive Hours

Item	Hours
Base hours, 7hrs/day	1820
Vacations, 10 yrs. seniority = 20 working days	140
Holidays, 14 days	98
Sick Leave, 1.5 days/month	126
Breaks, two 15 min.	104
NET	1352
80% productive	1082

Table 2 highlights a number of points. Somerville uses a 7-hour day versus the standard of eight used in many organizations. The benefits are equal and in some cases better than other government organizations. ISD is also impacted in relation to vacations because of the longevity of employees. The net hours are 1352 but since 100% productivity is generally not reasonable we use 80%. Bottom line, the net of

1082 productive hours is less than we often see but is a factor that needs to be considered in setting the appropriate staffing levels.

G. TECHNOLOGY

Overview

ISD's technology is generally out of date and processes are primarily paper driven. Some functions keep inaccurate data or keep data on spread sheets that don't lend themselves to good analysis. Some of the normal financial controls to be expected are not in place. Process timelines are generally not tracked and there is no use of field computers.

A variety of programs are being used to record financial transactions. As of the time of writing this report, a new system to scan ISD plans was under development.

The City has made a commitment to bring in a MUNIS suite of programs that will include Permits & Code Enforcement software. It has been funded, will include a cash register, and has been purchased with an installation date scheduled for early to mid 2011. We are generally familiar with this software and it should be capable of moving ISD ahead on its technology needs. We were not in a position to view the software or analyze in detail so we have chosen to simply indicate below features that should be included. These are:

- The program should interface with GIS, Assessors data and ESRI's Arch View. We understand that this is to be the case.
- The system is capable of interfacing with field computers but a decision has not been made on this and funding is currently not available. We suggest that the first installation be field computers for the officers in the Health Code Unit. Once this is up and running satisfactorily, the laptops should be used for the building inspectors.
- The system should allow for electronic plan submittal over the Internet and the use of credit cards.
- Applications should be immediately entered into MUNIS by the Inspector or Clerk while the applicant is at the counter. All signoffs by ISD staff as well as other departments or divisions should be completed on the computer. This avoids having to insert timing data since it will already be on the computer.
- MUNIS should be programmed to separate out City time from applicant time and time should be recorded for multiple cycles of review.
- MUNIS should be designed to interface with one or more electronic plan check products. The City will need to purchase the supplementary software along with at least one 40 inch monitor.

- All documents and photographs should be attached to MUNIS, facilitating an ISD move toward becoming a paperless office.
- Plans that are received in hard copy should immediately be scanned and attached to the MUNIS files.

32. *Recommendation:* MUNIS should be programmed to include the features outlined above.

33. *Recommendation:* The City should initially purchase field computers for the field staff in the Health Code Unit. Once this installation is successful, they should be purchased for building inspectors.

34. *Recommendation:* Once MUNIS is successfully installed and used, the City should purchase plan check software and at least one 40 inch monitor. At this point in time, the City should begin to accept electronic plan submittals in addition to hard copies.

On-line Permitting

The new permitting system has an option to allow customers to file for simple permits on-line with a credit card. This is a good service for both customers and the Building Unit and should be pursued as soon as possible. Currently the City only accepts either checks or money orders as a method of payment for building permits and for the payments of any fines.

Additionally the new software system will also be accessible by the public and the development community on a limited basis to review permit activity, plan review status, inspection status and other general information.

35. *Recommendation:* Allow simple permits such as electrical, mechanical and plumbing to be applied for over the Internet.

36. *Recommendation:* The City should accept credit cards as payments for all permits and for the payments of fines in addition to the checks and money orders.

37. *Recommendation:* The City should accept credit card payments over the internet.

- 38. Recommendation: The City should allow the public and the development community to have access on a limited basis to the review of the inspection results, to request inspection on line and to review the status of their plan reviews.**

Website

Websites have become an important part of government departments communicating with their citizens and increasing efficiency of operations.

Access to ISD starts by accessing the City of Somerville home page. A pull down menu shows City departments including the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD). ISD is then shown as a sub-set or division within OSPCD. While relatively straight forward, It would be useful if the City web site had an alphabetical index of all functions. Thus, someone not familiar with the City could immediately search and access information using traditional words like “building permits” or “code enforcement”

- 39. Recommendation: The City web site should include an alpha index.**

The front page for ISD has a description of the mission and more specifics in relation to the Building Unit and the Health Unit. This page also has excellent links to forms, regulations, fees, Boards and Commissions, brochures, and a variety of related links. The reference to the location of the ISD offices should be improved.

- 40. Recommendation: The address listing on the ISD page should specifically list ISD offices.**

Pages that follow specifically address both the Building Unit and Health Unit and include a variety of useful process information.

The following Table 3 shows a list of items that we believe should be added to the ISD website and an indication of many features that already exist.

Table 3
Website Features

Features	On ISD's Website
Overview description of division	yes
Main phone number	yes
Automated email contact feature	yes
Organization chart	No
Staff names, titles, direct phone lines & email addresses	No
Ordinances	yes
Handouts describing processes and applications	Limited
Applications and forms	yes
Tracking of permits	No
E-government application ability	No
Use of credit cards	No

41. Recommendation: ISD should expand its website to include the features listed in the table above.

H. TRAINING

We normally recommend that 2% of the annual personnel budget be set aside for training. The FY 09 ISD Budget shows \$991,650 for personnel costs and \$1,750 for staff development. This results in only .02% for training. While we understand the City's budget issues, there is a need for substantially more dollars for ISD training. This will be particularly critical as the new computer system and the recommendations from this study are implemented.

42. Recommendation: The ISD Staff training budget should be increased to \$15,000.

I. UNION ISSUES

All employees in ISD except for the Superintendent are members of the Somerville Municipal Employees Association (SMEA) Unit "B." The last contract expired on June 30, 2002 but has been continued in force through subsequent agreements, primarily addressing pay issues. The last such agreement terms ended June 30, 2006.

It appears that ISD has been one of the more entrenched union groups in the City and has participated in a number of arbitration issues.

It was suggested to us by a variety of people that improvements in ISD would be difficult in relation to the Union. We reviewed the 2002 contract which we believe does not overly inhibit an improvement program. Items of interest include:

- In order to provide proper services on the weekend some shift times may be required. Since many of the ISD employees were in Public Works when the Union contract was approved, it may be necessary to interpret the clauses relating to Public Works.
- The agreement includes substantial management rights.
- The agreement includes somewhat standard disciplinary procedures.

In a union environment, managers need to develop good skills in relating to the Union and developing a productive atmosphere. Some of the recommendations in this report will require consultation with the Union and it is anticipated that a constructive workable approach will evolve.

43. *Recommendation:* ISD management should develop a productive working relation with the Union.

V. BUILDING UNIT

A. CODES AND AUTHORITY

The current adopted codes for the City of Somerville, for the most part, address the majority of the code related issues for the City. However the city consists of many older structures that are often modified, changed, or added to. These older structures often can't comply with today's modern adopted codes. The International Code Council (ICC) does publish an Existing Building Code that could benefit the older structures and is designed to address older structures. Currently, the City is on the 2003 versions of the ICC Codes and is considering the adoption of the 2009 versions of the Codes. The City is at least one cycle behind in the adoption of current codes. There are 2006 versions of these same codes available and the 2009 versions are also available for adoption. The City must to some extent wait for the State to approve and adopt different versions of the codes at the State level prior to the City proposing the adoption. However, since the State is "home rule," the City does have the option of adopting more up-to-date or more restrictive versions of the codes. The City might want to consider updating the current adopted codes to a more up to date version like the 2009 editions. The current City adopted codes are for the most part published by the International Code Council (ICC) as a base document then adopted and/or modified by the State; they are as follows:

- International Building Code 2003 edition
- International Residential Code for 1 and 2 Family, 2003 edition.
- State Plumbing Code based on the International Plumbing Code, 2003 edition
- International Energy Code, 2003 edition
- International Fuel Gas Code, 2003 edition
- International Mechanical Code, 2003 edition
- International Fire Code. 2003 edition
- National Electric Code, 2005 edition as published by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and as amended by the State

- 44. *Recommendation:* The City should consider the adoption of the ICC Existing Building Code, to be utilized for older structures.**
- 45. *Recommendation:* The City Solicitor should review the possibility of the adoption of the 2009 versions of the ICC codes.**

Currently, ISD does not have many, if any written policies for the development, plan review, inspection, code enforcement, and health inspection processes. There are no flow charts or policies in place that can assist the public or provide information to the public on how to process a permit, obtain a permit, request a plan review, obtain an inspection, and submit a complaint.

For the benefit of the staff, the development community and the public, most cities and counties across the country have established written policies to help simplify the development process and to guide staff in performing the day to day activities associated with the process.

46. *Recommendation:* The ISD Superintendent should develop and implement written policies for the entire development review and permit process that is relevant to ISD. The Superintendent should work on the written policies each month and complete at least five new policies each month until the new policy manual is complete, adopted and implemented.

B. ACTIVITY NUMBERS

The Building Unit's implementation of the adopted codes, standards and ordinances is achieved through a limited plan review process, investigation and inspection of the work performed by the development community. This plan review and inspection process is designed to provide the minimum life, health and fire safety for the protection of the property and the public.

The Building Unit is also responsible for responding to complaints generated by the public for the enforcement of legal codes aiming to protect people from substandard living conditions.

The Unit provides recommendations to the Board of Aldermen for the adoption of building codes and recommends more restrictive amendments to the adopted codes for the protection of life, fire and health safety reasons, based on local conditions.

Additional areas of responsibility include the accountability for damage assessment, evaluation and determination of building safety after a natural or manmade disaster such as an earthquake, flood, fire or terrorist act. The Unit is responsible for ordering demolition or repair of damaged structures.

The Building Unit also works closely with the Planning, Fire, Engineering, and Public Works departments or divisions for the review and inspections of all development related projects within the City limits of Somerville. The Unit also works closely with the public and the development community on a daily basis.

The activity numbers for the Building Inspection staff are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Calendar Year Activity for Building Inspection Staff

Activity	05	06	07	08
Building permits issued	2052	1876	1793	1718
Building plan reviews	283	222	242	245
Builders licenses renewals	12	15	9	
Certificate of occupancies	506	297	203	233
Certificate of inspections	336	298	388	267
Gas permits	1208	906	833	788
Plumbing permits	1248	1015	1002	900
Snow tickets issued	626	72	248	164
Dumpster permits issued	247	230	106	
Annual public school inspections			13	13
Emergency Inspections			80	80
Annual business inspections			825	800
Every five year housing inspections			Part of 825 above	Part of 900 above
Renew builders licenses			10	12
Misc. requests for assistance			1,200	1,200

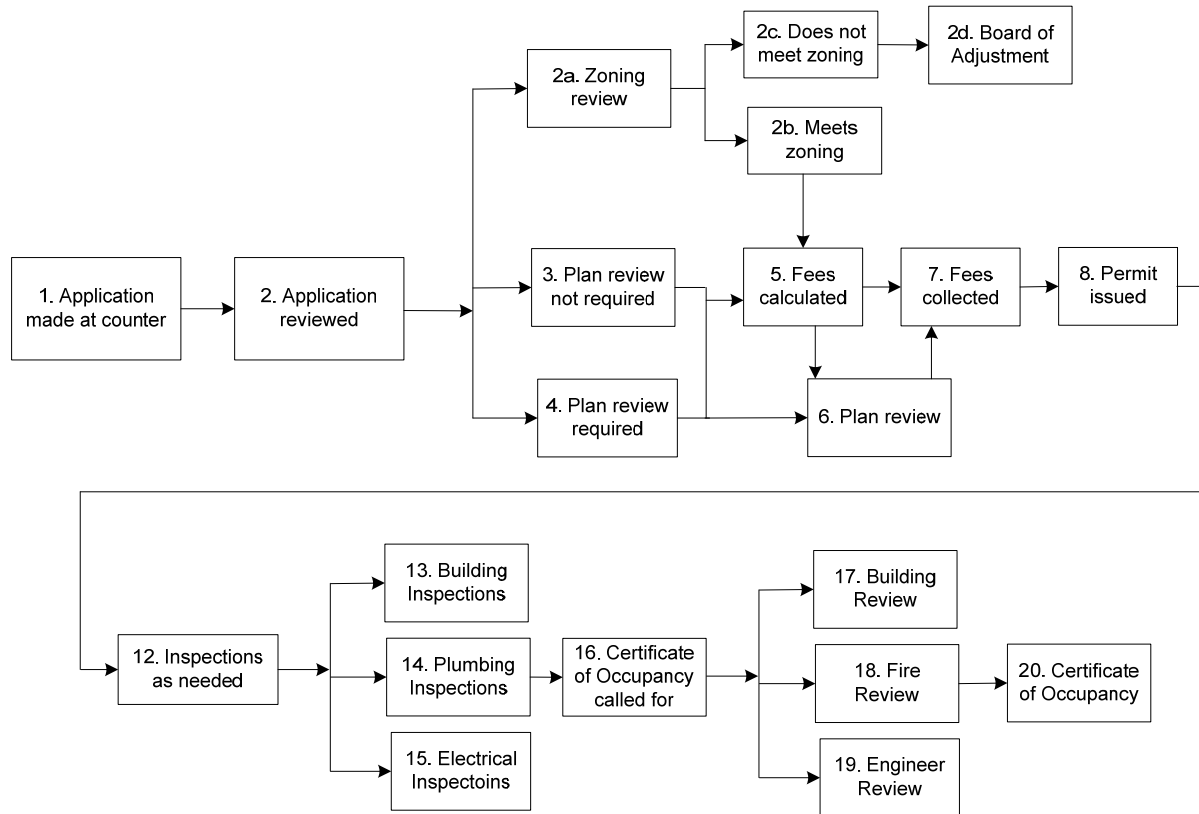
C. BUILDING PERMIT PROCESS

The process for issuing a building permit is shown in Figure 9, The following numbers correspond to the numbers in the boxes on the Figure.

1. The application is made at the ISD counter. Six forms are required to be completed.
2. An Inspector reviews the application and includes Zoning determination
 - 2a. Zoning review by Inspector

- 2b. If meets Zoning application proceeds
- 2c. Determination may be made that application does not meet zoning
- 2d. Applicant may take case to the Board of Appeals or Planning Board
- 3. Plan review not required
- 4. Plan review required
- 5. The fees are calculated by the Inspector for both plan review and permit issuance
- 6. Plan review is completed
- 7. Fees are collected
- 8. Permit is issued
- 9. A copy of the application and Building Permit are given to the customer.
- 10. Documents are maintained in the property's street file
- 11. Building record card is filed in a separate drawer.
- 12. Inspections as needed
- 13. Building Inspections completed
- 14. Plumbing Inspections completed
- 15 Electrical Inspections completed
- 16. When construction is completed and all inspections are completed, a Certificate of Occupancy is called for.
- 17. Building Inspector signs off
- 18. Fire Inspector signs off, if needed
- 19. Engineer signs off, if needed.
- 20 Final inspection completed and Certificate of Occupancy is issued.

**Figure 9
Building Permit Process**



D. COST AND REVENUE

The cost and revenues for Building Permits are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5
Building Permit Cost Revenue**

Fiscal Year	ISD Cost (includes both building and code enforcement)	Revenue (permits only)	Net
2007		1,363,510	
2008	987,289	1,854,042	+ 866,753
2009	988,865	1,742,298 *	+753,433
2010 projected	1,045,431 budget	1,145,197	+ 99,766

* Plus \$736,367 for IKEA

As can be seen in the Table 5 above, the ISD functions produce more revenue than cost. Even if external overhead costs were added (normally 20 to 40%), the situation for most years would be the same. In many communities this is used as the rationale to provide additional resources for the ISD function and/or to create an enterprise fund.

47. *Recommendation:* Additional resources should be appropriated to implement this study's recommendations.

E. ODDS AND ENDS

Demolition of Structures

Demolition of structures requires original signatures from 16 separate functions. This can be an elaborate and time-consuming process. Once MUNIS is in place, many of these functions should be able to sign off on the computer without need for original signatures. For others, there should be a process for certified signature via email.

48. *Recommendation:* The signature process for demolition permits should be streamlined.

Front Counter

While observing the front counter area and the interaction of the staff with the public, it appears that on occasion the staff can be very helpful but also on occasion the staff can be very short with members of the public and especially short and curt with members of the public who do not utilize English as their first language.

49. *Recommendation:* ISD staff should receive training to improve their skills in dealing with the public.

Before issuing permits the applicants are asked to go to City Hall to verify that taxes have been paid. However, ISD could check this on the computer as a convenience for the applicant. We understand that the MUNIS system will address this.

50. *Recommendation:* ISD should check by computer if applicant's taxes are paid.

F. PLAN CHECK

Staffing

Current staff assigned to the plan review process includes a Senior Building Inspector who performs the structural and mechanical review, a Chief Plumbing and Gas Inspector who performs the plumbing and fuel gas plan review, and a Chief Wire and Electrical Inspector who performs the electrical plan review, and a contract staff who reviews food establishments.

The City has a contract with an external vendor who fills in for inspection work only (not plan review) when the full-time chief plumbing inspector is away. Since there are two full-time wire inspectors working for DPW, these inspectors are supposed to coordinate their schedules so that one can cover for the other during vacations/leaves of absence.

At present the City has a modest contract with a licensed plumbing inspector for when the inspector is on vacation, but the contractor is not available for unanticipated absences such as unanticipated sick leave. Ideally the entire plan review functions could be handled by one plan review staff person. The current State law requires that all electrical inspections and electrical plan reviews be completed by an Electrical Journeyman. In order to become an Electrical Journeyman it takes several years of work experience in addition to passing the required tests and this will need to be taken into account when developing the plan check staffing plan.

Under current workloads, the Senior Building Inspector can handle the majority of plan checks with some occasional assistance from a Building Inspector. Ideally, ISD should have three staff capable of conducting plan checks. We suggest that initially the Senior Building Inspector and one Building Inspector be available in the office to conduct plan check and assist customers. The Senior Building Inspector should train the Building Inspector to conduct plan check. At some point a second Building Inspector should fulfill this role. This arrangement should also allow the Senior Building Inspector additional time to supervise the Building Inspector and work on quality control and other inspection recommendations in this report.

51. *Recommendation:* Evaluate work load and type of permits to determine number of plan review positions needed. Increase training of existing staff so more staff can perform complex plan review cases internally.

Plan Check Timing

State law specifies up to 30 days for plan review. It does not indicate if the 30 days apply to each cycle when there are multiple cycles. As part of this study, we were unable to obtain actual plan review times. However, it appears that ISD often requires

the full 30 days and then additional time if more than one cycle of review is required. ISD's unwritten policy for plan review is to allow for the full 30 days to complete a full plan review. However it is clear that the projects that are submitted for plan review are typically smaller projects that could be reviewed within two weeks rather than 30 days. For the larger projects such as commercial or industrial projects that are more complex in design and larger in nature, these can be reviewed within 15 to 20 days of submittal.

We like a system where plan review timelines are set for different types of projects. Timelines are also set for working days instead of calendar days. Finally the timelines are reduced for each cycle of review. The goal should be to meet the timelines 90% of the time. When timelines cannot be met, use of employee overtime, retired plan examiners, or stand-by consultants should be used to meet the timelines. Suggested timelines are shown in Table 6. The timeline for the first check is the time between plan submittal and when the review comments are given to the applicant. When the applicant re-submits the plans the clock starts again and ends when any additional review comments are given to the applicant or when the permit is issued.

Table 6
Proposed Building Plan Check Times in Working Days

	First Check	Second Check
New Construction (Residential)	15 days	10 days
New Construction (Commercial)	15 days (add 5 days for major projects)	10 days
Tenant Improvements	10 days	5 days
Residential remodels	10 days	5 days

52. *Recommendation:* Building plan check times should be as shown in Table 6.

53. *Recommendation:* The City should consider providing some cross training for plan reviews to one or more Building Inspectors currently on staff for the structural and mechanical aspects of plan review.

54. *Recommendation:* The City should consider providing some cross training for plan reviews to another Building Inspector, currently on staff for the Plumbing, Fuel Gas and for the Electrical provisions of plan review.

Consultants

The use of plan review and inspection consulting firms can be beneficial to a jurisdiction when used as a back-up for vacations, sick leaves and for when the workload suddenly increases and finally for larger more complex projects that can take years to complete. The City currently does not utilize consultant firms for this purpose. The City does have an external consultant under contract for plumbing and gas inspections needed while the chief plumbing inspector is away.

55. *Recommendation:* The Building Unit should utilize consultants to assure that all plan checks meet established performance standards. Our recommendations are listed elsewhere in this report.

56. *Recommendation:* The Building Unit should hire at least two (2) consulting firms to assist with peak workload periods, with the backlog of plan reviews and with requests for expedited plan reviews.

- 57. *Recommendation:*** Assign one (1) Building Supervisor to each hired consulting firm as the main point of contact among the City, the public and the consulting firm. Additionally this assigned staff member should also be in charge of all issues relating to the contracts between the City and the consulting firm.
- 58. *Recommendation:*** Empower the staff member assigned to the plan examiner consultant to be able to resolve all the plan review related issues in a timely manner.
- 59. *Recommendation:*** The Building Department should develop a Request For Proposal (RFP) that seeks the use of outside consulting firms to assist with the plan review process. The RFP should include specific requirements outlined in the “Scope of Services” sections that would clearly direct the selected consulting firms to work directly with the development community to resolve code related plan check issues as indicated below:
- Require the plan check consultant to contact the developer, builder, homeowner and/or architect directly to inform them of the identified plan check issues in a timely manner as established by the City.
 - Require the plan check consultant to write each correction item clearly enough for the applicant to understand, and to indicate the related code section for each correction, and to provide a copy of that correction list to the City staff.
 - Require the plan check consultant to be available by phone, e-mail, and fax and in person in order to resolve any outstanding plan check related issues and in order for the development community to have access to the specific consultant plan checker.
 - Require the plan check consultant to be located within ISD offices and perform training for ISD staff to increase internal capacity for plan review.
 - Require the plan check consultant to have liability insurance for the protection of the City and in the amounts as established by the City.
 - Require the plan consultant to have errors and omissions insurance in the amounts as established by the City.
 - Require the plan check consultant to have workers compensation insurance in the specific amounts as required by the City.
 - Require the plan check consultant to meet specific turnaround times for residential, commercial and industrial plan reviews as established by the City for the first and second plan reviews completed by the consulting firms.

- **Requires the plan check consulting firm to comply with the City's adopted fee schedule.**
- **Establishes a specific method of payment that would restrict the consultant to only collect a maximum of 80% of the City plan review fee collected for every project assigned to the plan check consultant rather than on an hourly basis.**
- **Holds the plan check consultant responsible for any and all incorrect plan reviews and requires the plan check consultant to be involved in any re-checking of the plans and specifications as well as any engineering calculations at their own costs if an error is discovered that can be directly related back to a mistake by the consulting firm.**
- **Requires the plan check consultant to pick up and deliver the plans to/from the City.**
- **Requires the plan check consultant to review the plans in accordance with the approved and adopted State, Federal and City codes, rules, regulations and local ordinances.**
- **Require the consultant to stamp the plans as approved once all the outstanding corrections, if any, have been resolved and all the minimum code requirements have been met.**

Scanning of Documents

The City has initiated the scanning of building permit documents. The room for all projects under plan review and construction and the file room for all completed construction projects are in disarray and need some attention. There is currently no specific method or controlled method to check in or out the old plans and the new plans that are filed in these rooms. Additionally there is no method to log these plans into either room. When these plans are required for any reason, the current process to find these specific plans is to just go through everything until the plans are found (if they are found). This method is not user friendly and it is very time consuming for the staff and for the public as well as for the development community. The Building Permits, along with the electrical and plumbing permits area are also in disarray. Nothing is easy to find in the Building Unit.

Figure 10
Plan Room



- 60.** *Recommendation:* The City should speed up the scanning process to insure that all the building data is scanned including all the old plans on file.
- 61.** *Recommendation:* The Building Unit should require that all new plans submitted for plan review also include a copy of the plans submitted for review on computer disk.
- 62.** *Recommendation:* The Building Unit should develop and implement a plan review filing system to keep better track of the plans that have been approved and are on file.
- 63.** *Recommendation:* The Building Unit should develop and implement a plan review filing system for the old plans on file for those projects that have already been completed.

G. INSPECTIONS

Inspection Requests

The current policy is to complete inspections within 48 hours of a request. The norm appears to be two or three days, however, some are made the next day after a request. Delays in inspection can be very costly to the contractors. The national standard is next day inspections. Many communities have a cut off time so that any requests received by 4:00 p.m. are inspected the next day. As with plan check, if the inspection load becomes too heavy to meet the standard, stand-by inspectors can be used.

64. *Recommendation:* Ninety percent of inspections called in by 4:00 p.m. should be completed the following day.

Inspection Areas

Inspections are currently assigned daily on a more or less random basis. The inspection staff attempts to respond to the requested inspections for the projects which they assisted at the front counter in the issuance of the permits. However this does not always happen. The inspections sometimes overlap and the Building Inspectors will often drive by each other while they are making their daily inspections. The inspection staff attempts to divide up the daily inspections on an even basis but they do not consider nor are assigned a specific inspection area of the City. The inspection staff indicated that because the City is small in area that they can get around in a timely manner without the need of assigned areas.

The City, roughly two years ago, did have specific assigned inspection areas for each inspector. However due to recent injuries and the down turn in the work load the individual inspection areas have not been recently utilized. The implementation of inspection areas can benefit the City and the community by allowing a quicker response time for the requested inspections and by allowing the individual inspector to become more familiar with a specific inspection area. This would also allow the inspector to become more aware of the construction activity in his or her specific area and allow each of them to be more responsive on a pro-active basis for those construction projects that are being built without the benefits of the proper permits, inspections and plan reviews. Inspection staff often will drive back and forth across town to perform their inspections often times making inspections on the next street where another inspector has performed an inspection that same day. Without inspection areas, a lot of additional driving time and lost inspection happens each day.

65. *Recommendation:* ISD should consider the development and implementation of individual inspection areas for each Building Inspector.

With the implementation of the inspection areas, often times a city will rotate these specific inspection areas among inspectors on a regular basis. Some cities implement a rotation every 12 months while others do this twice a year.

66. *Recommendation:* ISD should rotate inspection areas at least twice a year.

Quality Control

The Senior Building Inspector is currently performing the vast majority of the plan reviews for the City. The vast majority of his time is taken up performing these plan reviews. He has little time to train the Building Inspection staff on a regular and consistent basis. He has provided some training for the staff and will continue to have additional training seminars as time permits. Most cities and/or counties will assign their Senior Inspectors to also provide regular training and to drive along with each Inspector several times a year to assist with training, and the development of their personnel reviews and to observe their daily routines. Currently ISD does not require the Senior Building Inspector to perform “ride-alongs” with each Building Inspector. The training and the ride-along days can be a benefit to the City and to ISD.

67. *Recommendation:* The ISD Superintendent should develop and implement a policy for the Senior Building Inspector to drive along with each Building Inspector at least twice a year to assist with their training and with the completion of their individual employee evaluations.

Office and Field Hours/Workload

The existing staff are required to be in the office in the morning hours from 8:00 AM until 10:00 AM each work day. They are also required to return to the office from 3:00 PM until 4:00 PM each work day. This requirement only allows for 4 hours of inspection time each day. The Building Inspectors regular office hours are from 8:00 AM until 4:00 PM. The Electrical and Plumbing Inspectors regular office hours are from 7:30 AM until 4:00 PM.

68. *Recommendation:* Change the required office hours for the Building Inspectors assigned in the field from 8:00 AM until 10:00 AM and from 3:00 PM until 4:00 PM to 8:00 AM until 9:00 AM only.

The Building Inspectors have been unofficially instructed to only perform four (4) inspections in the morning and another four (4) inspections in the afternoon hours. However it appears that the inspection staff will also be on the lookout for projects

under construction that are not permitted. Most city and county inspection staff can complete between 12 to 15 inspections on a daily basis each. This is an acceptable standard and is very workable especially for a city limited in size. Somerville's restricted inspection response is currently working because of the decrease in construction activity that is taking place due to the economic conditions. However this system can lead to a back log in the amount of inspections requests and can cause great delays with the inspection and development process.

69. *Recommendation:* The ISD Superintendent should develop and implement a new policy that will require each Building Inspector to complete between 12 and 15 inspections per day. This can include a mixture of inspections and complaint responses.

This un-written policy was established partly due to the fact that the City requires a Building Inspector to sign off on all the permits issued at the front counter. If the City had permit or counter technicians on staff then these staff members could issue building permits and relieve many of the Building Inspectors to go out in the field for longer time frames. Other permits that are non-technical in nature could be issued by trained clerical staff. One Inspector would be assigned to plan review and would remain in the office to review more complex applications in addition to the Senior Building Inspector. Most cities will have the Building Inspectors in the office only from 8:00 AM till 9:00 AM each day to complete paper work and provide needed assistance at the front counter. The remainder of the day, the Building Inspectors can spend in the field responding to inspections and complaints. This working hour schedule then allows the Building Inspector to be in the field six (6) hours rather than the current four (4) hours as laid out today.

70. *Recommendation:* Re-train the clerical staff to become efficient in the issuance of building permits or for the City to consider hiring Permit Techs or Counter Techs who are trained and have the abilities to issue building permits over the front counter.

While making their daily inspections, the Building Inspectors will also look out for possible Building Code and Health Code violations. If any are discovered then the Building Inspector will either call the Code Enforcement Officer or Health Inspector to the scene or they will take note of the possible issues and forward the issues to the appropriate Unit for follow up later that day or for the next day. This is a good process.

Only two (2) Building Inspectors are assigned to perform regular daily inspections for construction projects. One (1) inspector is assigned to respond to complaints and then other inspector is assigned to handle all the certificate inspections. This process again limits the amount of inspections that can be performed on a daily basis.

71. Recommendation: ISD should consider splitting up all the requested construction inspection, certificate inspections and complaints evenly among the four (4) Building Inspectors on a daily basis.

The Plumbing and Electrical Inspectors currently accept and schedule their own daily inspections. The Electrical Inspector also performs other related duties for the Public Works Department.

The staff currently completes a basic daily log for all the building inspection related activity. However we were not made aware of any daily inspections logs kept by the electrical and plumbing inspection staff other than their own personal logs.

72. Recommendation: The City should develop and implement a more comprehensive daily inspection log sheet. The log sheet at a minimum should include the job site address, inspector assigned to the project, exact inspection(s) requested the date and the daily total requested inspections.

There is no formal lunch schedule for the Building Staff that allows everyone to take their contracted lunch and break periods without any lapse in office coverage. They work well together to provide coverage however there are occasions when the public counter operations has been closed during lunch time because there were not enough staff to provide coverage.

73. Recommendation: Develop a specific break and lunch schedule for all the ISD Division staff.

The Building Unit has a big backlog in older permits that have not been closed out as a result of a final inspection and are therefore technically still open. These permits are not looked at unless a final inspection is requested by either the owner or the contractor. The Unit does not have a policy in place to address these older permits that still must be finalized.

74. Recommendation: The Building Unit should develop and implement a new policy that would require all the older permits on file to be inspected for a final inspection.

75. Recommendation: The Building Unit should assign at least two (2) of the older permits per inspector on a daily basis for them to go out to the site and investigate the progress of that specific permit with the possibility of finalizing those older permits.

Inspections/Correction Notices

The Building Inspectors perform their daily inspection duties in a similar manner. That is they inspect each project per the minimum requirements of the code. Most correction notices appear to be in a verbal form. Although some correction notices appear to be completed in a written form, they are inconsistent.

The Inspectors do on occasion send out violation letters for some of the projects. However, on a daily basis when there is a correction to be made all these correction comments are normally in verbal form and provided from the inspector to the contractor. There should always be written corrections in case the same inspector cannot go out to the same site each day or in case of vacation and or sick time back up times and in order to insure that the contractor understands the corrections and completes the corrections.

76. *Recommendation:* The Superintendent should develop and implement a written policy for all the inspection staff to complete a written correction notice for all those permitted construction projects where they find and discover items that must be corrected in order to meet the minimum requirements of the code. The correction notice should also include the specific code related section that applies to the specific items identified.

Some of the inspectors appear to be blunt and short fused with the public especially those members of the public who do not utilize English as their first language. Other inspectors appear more willing to at least attempt to work out a solution to the issues at hand. It also appears that some of the inspectors have a better controlled working relationship with the development community and with the public..

The inspectors should view their role as in partnership with the applicant. Most applicants (particularly homeowners) want a good inspection so long as it is timely and consistent with the code.

77. *Recommendation:* Inspectors should receive public relations training to improve relations with the public.

Annual Housing Inspections

The Building Inspectors make the required annual inspections for those multi-family structures that are four or more units in size. One Building Inspector is currently assigned to perform these inspections on a daily basis. However he is also requested to only perform four (4) inspections in the morning hours and another four (4) in the afternoon hours. There is currently a large backlog with this inspection process. A large majority of the residential properties in the city are multi-family units. The exact percentage of units that are four or larger is not known. ISD records do not appear to

be up to date on this issue. This practice that each building inspector is to only perform eight (8) inspections a day is very limiting. Most cities, and/or counties will have their inspection staff perform between 12 and 15 inspections daily. Given the area and size of Somerville it appears that the Building Inspectors could perform between 12 and 15 inspections a day.

78. *Recommendation:* The Superintendent should develop and implement a new policy for the staff to investigate the exact number of multi-family dwelling units in the city and to insure that these units are inspected, as required by law on a regular basis and that the back log should be reviewed and dealt with.

Phone Calls and Email

No policy exists that requires the staff to return phone calls on a daily basis or to review and answer e-mails on a daily basis. Some of the staff indicated that they have just started to utilize their e-mail accounts and that they have had little training in the use of their computers.

79. *Recommendation:* Develop and implement a policy that would require the ISD staff to answer their phone messages and e-mail messages on a daily basis.

VI. HEALTH CODE UNIT

A. OVERVIEW

Staffing

The Health Code Unit is made up of a Supervisor, four Code Enforcement Officers, a Senior Sanitarian position which is currently vacant, and an Administrative Assistant. Two Code Enforcement Officers are assigned to work in the evenings, however their primary responsibility is to tour the city and check for weeds, trash, debris and overgrowth. The Code Enforcement staff also respond to complaints made on the new 311-complaint system, as well as other code enforcement issues. A contract, part-time Sanitarian is currently responsible for inspecting restaurants.

Electronic Documentation and Data Entry

Currently the Health Unit is unorganized. A lot of the complaints are not completed and the loop is not closed. A lot of the work product is completed on a verbal basis with the public and within the office. Additionally, the health code inspectors will not complete their own work on the computer. They turn all their complaints and other paper work to the one clerk they have on staff. The paper work load has the potential to overwhelm the clerical staff daily and the paper work never gets caught up and is several months behind. The clerical staff member is forced with a daily choice on exactly which paper work should be completed by her and in what order. This system has caused the 311-complaint system to fall behind with up-to-date information on the complaints responded to. This filing system and paper work issues seems to hold true for all the administrative tasks and records keeping issues within the Health Unit.

80. Recommendation: The Senior Code Enforcement Officer/Supervisor should develop and implement a new policy that will require each member of the Health Unit (inspectors and code enforcement officers alike) to input their own complaint information into the computer on a daily basis.

Activity

The activity levels for the Health Unit are shown in Table 7.

Table 7
Code Enforcement Activities (Calendar Years)

Violation Type	2006	2007	2008
Residential Trash	2,822	2,921	2,952
Commercial Trash	263	151	83
Snow/Ice Removal	288	694	217
Trash Removal from Storefront	90	22	29
Weeds and Grass	210	75	441

Hours of Activity

There is no current policy in place that requires specific public office hours for the Health Unit. Additionally one of the Code Enforcement Officers will attend Thursday evening hearings with the City's Hearing Officer for those cases that are heard on appeal.

81. Recommendation: The Health Unit should establish specific office hours for the Code Enforcement staff to be available for the public.

The Code Enforcement staff are scheduled on a rotating basis to respond to emergency related complaints on weekends and on holidays. The emergency complaints are related to fire and police incidents, and other emergencies as deemed necessary by the Supervisor. The staff are paid time and a half in four-hour segments for responses to complaints on Saturdays and are paid double time for responses on Sundays and Holidays. Although this system handles certain types of emergency complaints, it would also be useful to have at least one health code inspector available on week-ends to respond to more routine complaints without the need to pay overtime. Currently, the Director/Superintendent handles some of these investigations but a Code Enforcement Officer would be useful. In addition to complaints, the Officer could do random checking throughout the City since it appears a considerable amount of un-permitted work takes place over the weekend.

82. Recommendation: ISD should consider having a Code Enforcement Officer work on Saturdays and Sundays.

B. CODE ENFORCEMENT PROCESS

Overall Process

The process for code enforcement is shown in Figure 11. This is a straightforward process that generally works well. Complaints come in from four sources: members of

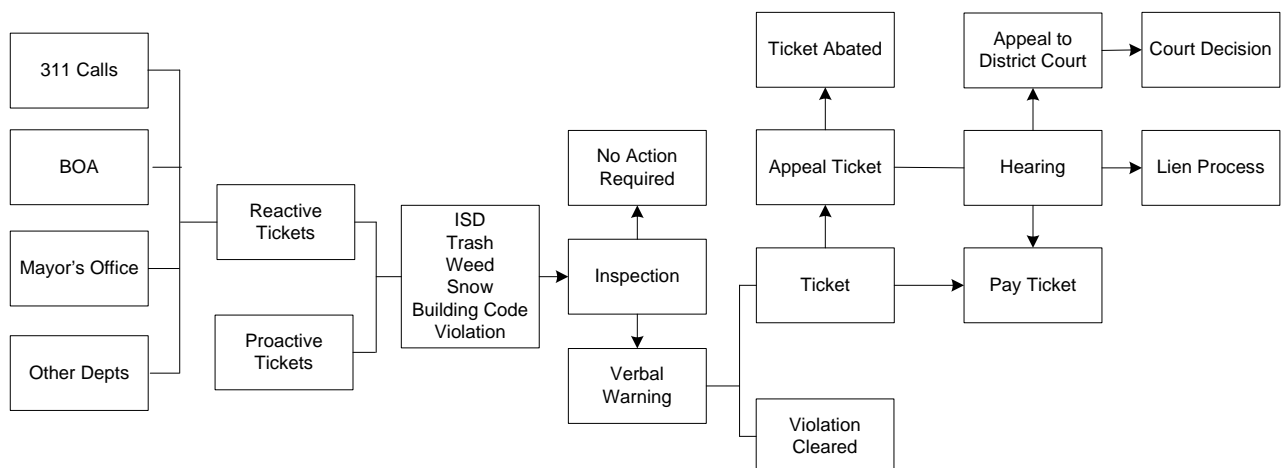
the Board of Aldermen (BOA), direct phone calls from the Mayor's Office, 311 calls and staff from other departments. Inspections of complaints normally take place on the following day, which is a good practice. The complaints go to the Chief Code Enforcement Inspector to distribute. While normally this is good practice, there may be a variety of actions that could flow directly to the Code Enforcement Officers. For the most part, violators are given 30 days to comply. Much of this process is manual and reports are typed or put into the computer by clerical staff. However, the process should be reviewed for possible streamlining with the new MUNIS software.

While on duty, if the Code staff identifies any Building Code related items they will either contact the Building Unit directly to get someone to respond that same day if it is an emergency, or they will take down the information and turn that information into the Building Inspectors each evening for the next day response.

The two Code Enforcement Officers that work the evenings receive an average of about 12 to 15 complaints each week that they must respond to. Their primary responsibilities are to respond to complaints and to drive through the City to uncover trash, debris and overgrowth code violations.

The three health inspectors who work during the day, each respond to between 12 and 15 complaints a day. Their work load is varied and includes responding to crime scenes, crime scene clean up, weeds, trash issues, rats, and bed bugs complaints.

Figure 11
Code Enforcement Process



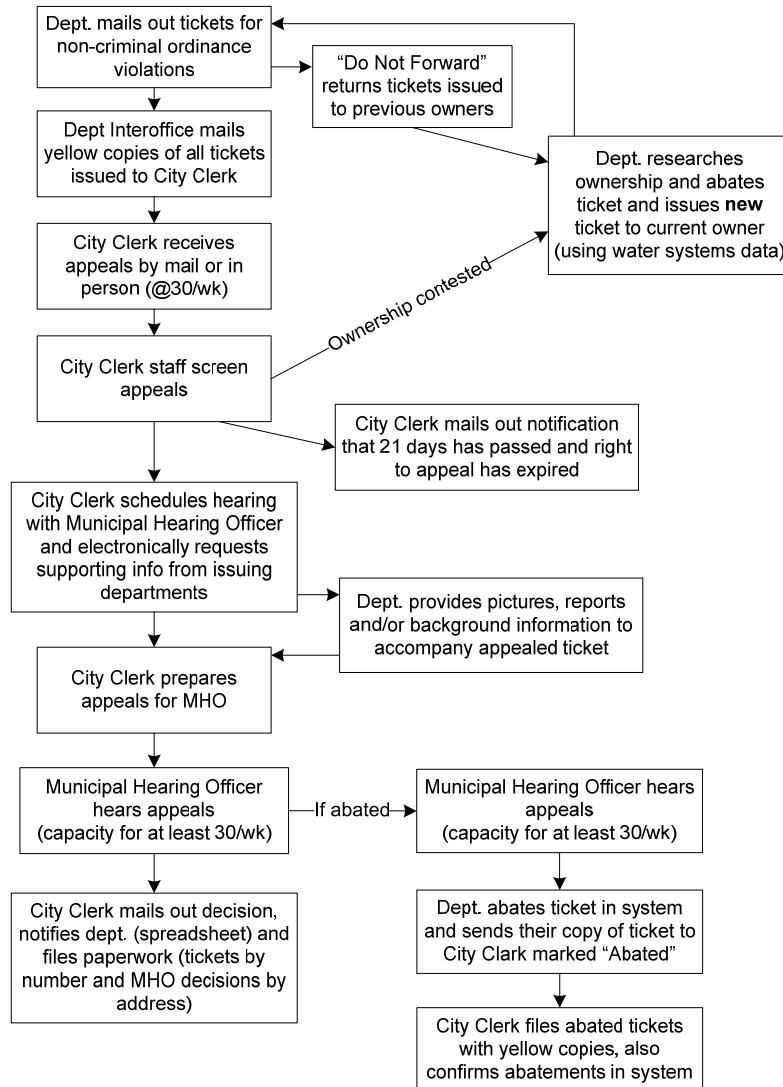
Municipal Hearing Officer Appeal Process

The appeal process for tickets and fines was charted by SomerStat and is summarized in Figure 12. This is generally a straightforward and well-developed program. We concur with SomerStat's suggestion that the City Clerk abate the tickets in the system which would remove two steps. It also appears that some of ISD's reports for the

hearing could be better automated. This entire process should be reviewed as part of the new MUNIS software system.

83. Recommendation: The City should review the Code Enforcement Process and Hearing Officer Appeal process as part of the new MUNIS Software.

Figure 12
Municipal Hearing Officer Appeal Process



C. CRIME SCENE ISSUES

The City has only provided the Code Enforcement inspectors a bottle of bleach and a pair of gloves for their required crime scene responses and clean ups. The staff does not have the minimum required tools to perform their respective job responsibility. The Code Enforcement Officers who respond to a crime scene are also required to clean up that crime scene if the crime was committed on public property such as a City park or public sidewalk. The City does have a crime scene specialist company who does complete crime scene clean ups on private property only. No professional training has been provided to the staff for the crime scene response and clean up responsibilities.

84. *Recommendation:* The Health Unit should provide proper training for crime scene response, crime scene clean-up, as well as certifications for those Code Enforcement Officers who respond to crime scenes

85. *Recommendation:* The City and the ISD Division should provide the proper clean up tools and equipment for those Code Enforcement Officers who respond to the crime scene clean ups.

86. *Recommendation:* The City and the ISD Division should consider contracting the entire crime scene clean ups to an outside firm who specializes in crime scene clean ups, this would include all private and public property crime scenes.

D. OTHER ISSUES

Communications

We received a number of complaints that it is hard to reach staff on the phone with many calls going to an answering machine. We were also made aware of a Union grievance where Code Enforcement Officers indicated that they should not answer phones and only the clerical staff should answer the phones. We were not able to find the final disposition of this grievance.

We have no objection to a system where clerical staff answer a high percent of the phone calls. However, for certain types of calls it may be appropriate to go directly to a Code Enforcement Officer. Bottom line, the important thing is that ISD be responsive to the customers in timely answering of the phone.

- 87. *Recommendation:* ISD should establish internal phone policies with the goal of being responsive to the customers.**

Confidentiality

Staff indicates that the name of the complainant is generally but not always kept confidential to the public. We believe code enforcement programs are most effective when complaints are kept confidential. ISD should reinforce this approach in a staff policy.

- 88. *Recommendation:* All code enforcement complaints should remain confidential.**

Proper Tools

- 89. *Recommendation:* The City and the Department should provide as the budget allows, proper tools for the Code Enforcement Officers, such as light meters, sound meters, screw drivers, pliers, flashlights, hard hats, gloves, hazmat suites for crime scene clean up, rubber boots for crime scene clean up, mops, brooms, dust pans, hazmat containers for body parts, long needle nose pliers to pick up used needles and other body parts, a pressure sprayer for the bleach, and a temperature gauge to check the temperatures of meats.**

E. 311 COMPLAINT SYSTEM

The 311 complaint phone system is designed for community members to be able to call one phone line to file a complaint of any kind, and for that phone line to be answered by a live person who is able to take the complaint and send that specific complaint off to the correct department and/or division for immediate response.

Currently, the 311-complaint system is taking in on the average about 400 complaints each workday. On weekends the system handles around 150 complaint calls a day. The vast majority of these 311 complaints are directly related to either road conditions, traffic issues and traffic tickets. These complaints average about 65% to 70% of the calls each day. The remainder of the 311 complaints are related to building, code enforcement, health issues, public works issues and snow removal during the winter months.

It appears that the majority of the 311 complaints are logged into each division's 311-complaint log system but that the majority of the complaints are never closed out. As such, the lack of closing out of the 311 complaints is a major road block to the effectiveness of the 311 system. This close out information is needed in order to

inform the public, and the elected officials of the final resolution to the complaints. A lot of information is lost when the close out portion of the 311 system is not utilized.

ISD staff has also indicated that in their opinion the 311 system does not work well and is ineffective. Some of the reasons cited include:

- The staff answering the phones for the 311 system are not familiar enough with how the City works and often times will direct the complaint to the wrong department or division.
- The assigned staff that answer the complaint calls will often not ask the correct questions in order to make a better determination as to who should address the specific complaint.
- The Aldermen often will bypass the 311 system and call staff directly.
- The management staff will also by pass the 311 system and call staff directly.
- Staff will often get calls in the field by either Management staff and/or Aldermen to address specific complaints and these direct calls are not logged into the 311 complaint system.
- Staff is often times given different directions on how to respond to the 311 complaints.

It should be noted that the script for the operators was written with and approved by the code enforcement staff. If there are errors, they should work with the 311 system to correct the instructions.

90. *Recommendation:* The City should provide annual training for the 311 operators to better understand each departments and division's roll in order to better direct the 311 complaints to the proper departments.

91. *Recommendation:* The ISD staff should follow the adopted procedure to file complaints on the 311 system.

92. *Recommendation:* The elected officials should follow the adopted procedure to file a complaint on the 311 system.

93. *Recommendation:* The Senior Code Enforcement Officer/Supervisor should develop and implement a new policy that will require and direct the Code Enforcement staff to insure that on a daily basis they input all the 311 complaint information into the system including providing information on the exact results of each complaint so that complaints are properly closed out.

F. FOOD SAFETY INSPECTOR

The City currently has only one part time, temporary employee under contract who handles all the required food establishment inspections and plan reviews, as well as responds to complaints related to food establishments. The contracted employee works only two (2) days a week for 8 hours each day. In the past the City had two (2) full time staff members providing the same service. Currently four to five food safety inspections are performed by this contracted employee each day worked; however, the number of inspections is insufficient to cover the demand and the back log for the existing food establishments continues to grow. There are currently 435 legal food permits within the City and it is estimated that there could be as much as a hundred more that have been established without proper permits.

This part-time staff person is also required to inspect temporary functions that also include food vendors. However, due to current workloads these temporary food establishments are often overlooked. It is estimated that there are at least 30 special events held within the City each year that are not properly permitted or inspected. It also appears that on occasion staff has taken it upon themselves to find a way to waive City required fees for these temporary events. However, there is no policy that allows staff to waive fees. There should be a policy in place that states only the City Council has the ability to waive fees unless it wishes to delegate this authority.

There are also only five (5) legal mobile vendors within the city. However it is estimated that there are at least 15 to 20 mobile vendors operating in the city who do not have a proper City license and are not inspected due to the limited amount of staff and staff time.

State law also requires that all ice cream vendors and their ice cream machines be inspected each year and that their products be sent to a lab for testing. No inspections have been completed for any ice cream vendor in years and none of their products have been sent to a lab for testing. There is a back log for these required inspections and required testing.

In addition, State law requires that the legal food establishments be inspected at least two times a year. The backlog for these required semi-annual inspections continues to grow.

It appears that the City is collecting fees to cover all the required Health Inspector services but that all the services are not being provided because there is currently only one part time food establishment inspector working just two days a week. The City collected \$200,005 in related Health fees in 2009. It is also estimated that the City is losing out on approximately \$50,000 to \$70,000 in revenue directly related to those food establishments who are not getting their timely annual inspections, for un-licensed mobile food vendors, and un-licensed food establishments operating in the

City and for those temporary food/fairs that are not obtaining any health clearance at all to operate.

- 94. *Recommendation:*** The City should consider filling the existing Senior Sanitarian vacancy and cross training two existing inspectors and compensate them for part-time duties as sanitarians or hiring two (2) full time sanitarians, as the budget allows, to complete all the required annual inspections for all the food establishments, ice cream vendors, temporary food events, and mobile vendors.
- 95. *Recommendation:*** The City and the Health Unit should inspect each food establishment at least two times a year as required by State law.
- 96. *Recommendation:*** The City and the Health Unit should inspect all the ice cream vendors and ice cream machines annually as required by State Law.
- 97. *Recommendation:*** The City and the Health Unit should require all temporary permits for special functions to be reviewed and permitted, if required, for compliance with State and local laws relating to temporary food establishments.
- 98. *Recommendation:*** The City and the Health Unit should license and inspect of all the mobile food service vendors in the City.
- 99. *Recommendation:*** The City and the Health Unit should consider hiring an outside Health Inspection firm on a full or part-time basis to assist with the back-log of all the required Health Inspections for all food establishments in the City until the entire back-log is eliminated.
- 100. *Recommendation:*** The City and the Health Unit should consider providing the food safety inspector with citation authority as allowed by State law and allow the staff to utilize that authority.

G. NEIGHBORHOOD IMPACT TEAM (NIT)

In 2004 the City created the Neighborhood Impact Team consisting of representatives from the Building Unit, Fire Department, Health Unit, Department of Public Works, Council on Ageing, Law Department, and Police. The team meets every Tuesday and visits problem sites as a group, one person from each department, division or unit. The group is currently coordinated by the SomerStat employee stationed in ISD. This is an excellent approach for a city like Somerville and should be continued.

H. TICKETING PROGRAM

ISD has two Code Enforcement Officers that cover the entire city from Monday to Friday. One Officer works from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and 12:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The other regularly works from 3 pm to 11 pm. Pictures are taken for all violations. Tickets are sent to the residential addresses but left on the front door for bar establishments. Most tickets start at \$50 for the first offense and then escalate when not paid. The Officer's process the tickets at the office. They generally believe that they can keep up with demand. Tickets are issued for:

- Residential Trash Removal
- Commercial Trash Removal
- Snow/Ice Removal
- Snow/Ice in Streets
- Dog Fouling in streets
- Leash Law
- Barking Dog
- Unlicensed Dog (enforced by the Police Department)
- Noise Ordinance
- Outdoor Seating
- Projections over Sidewalks
- Lack of Street Numbering
- Grass/Weed Overgrowth
- Garage Ordinance
- Other Citations.

Currently, there are a large number of un-paid tickets. These should be reviewed to develop additional collection systems. Complaints have been made that tickets are sent to incorrect addresses, but staff have been directed to send them to the addresses

from the Assessor's Database with the exception of snow tickets for businesses which are given directly to the business owner. Data on property ownership is now being uploaded into the Health Unit's database weekly. If not paid, tickets go into the lien process and the Treasurer follows State law regarding the mailing processes.

VII. BENCHMARKING

A. OVERVIEW

Benchmarking communities, organizations, and programs can be very useful provided there is adequate time to undertake detailed benchmarking. The best way to do this is to have staff from one community visit another community and see in depth what they are doing.

Most benchmarking done as part of Organization Analysis is done using a mail survey. While these can provide some indicators, they can also be very misleading. Typical problems include:

- The data or responses to questionnaire or phone calls are unaudited. In our experience the data is often not accurate.
- Terminology is also a problem. It may appear that the same programs are being discussed; however, there are often differences from community to community.
- The mix of types of permits or activities can affect both organization and staffing needs and this is difficult to isolate in a mail survey.
- When dealing with time estimates, some communities include only government time, others include both applicant and government time.
- We have found that there are often differences in the way communities count permits or count inspections.

Benchmarking for building permit and inspection functions can be more reliable than benchmarking for planning functions since the codes and inspection processes are often similar. Of most importance for Somerville is the fact that we have conducted over 100 reviews of building departments and can use our own experience and expertise as to the appropriate plan check and inspection times.

SomerStat has already conducted some benchmarking as shown in Table 8 below. We feel that data can be misleading so have manipulated the data in some of the following sections.

Table 8
Organization: Functions by Department *

	Amesbury	Fall River	New Bedford	Newton	Providence	Somerville	Springfield
Animal Control	Contracted	Police (3 civilian)	Police (2 sworn)	Police (2 sworn)	Police (2)	Police (1.5 civilian)	Health & Human Services (14)
Fire Code Enforcement	Fire (1 sworn)	Fire (7 sworn)	Fire (5 sworn)	Fire (5 sworn)	Fire (14 - 3 civilians, 11 sworn)	Fire (5 sworn)	Fire (10.5 sworn)
General Building Code Enforcement	Inspectional Services (1)	Inspectional Services (3)	Inspectional Services (9)	Inspectional Services (5)	Inspectional Services (11)	Inspectional Services (7.5)	Inspectional Services (8.8)
Health Code Enforcement	Contracted	Inspectional Services (3)	Inspectional Services (7)	Health & Human	N/A	Inspectional Services (5)	Health & Human
Local Code Enforcement	Inspectional Services	Inspectional Services (4)	Inspectional Services (2)	Inspectional Services (0)	Public Works (7)	Services (2.5) and Public Works (2)	Inspectional Services (8)
Plumbing and Gasfitting	Inspectional Services (.5)	Inspectional Services (2)	Inspectional Services (2)	Inspectional Services (2)	Inspectional Services (4)	Inspectional Services (1)	Inspectional Services (3.7)
Weights, Measures & Sealers	Contracted	Inspectional Services (1)	Inspectional Services (1)	Licensing (1)	N/A	Public Works (1)	Inspectional Services (2)
Wire Inspections	Inspectional Services (.5)	Inspectional Services (1)	Inspectional Services (1)	Inspectional Services (2)	Inspectional Services (3)	Public Works (1)	Inspectional Services (4)
Zoning Administration	Inspectional Services	Inspectional Services	Planning (1)	Inspectional Services (1)	Inspectional Services (2)	Planning (2)	Inspectional Services (3.5)
Total	3	24	30	22.4	32	28.5	60.5
Population	16,450	91,079	92,538	82,819	175,255	74,554	151,176
Staff per 10K Pop	1.82	2.64	3.24	2.70	1.83	3.82	4.00

*Source: SomerStat

B. ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING

Elected officials and citizens often like to calculate number of staff per population. We seldom make those calculations because we find they can simply be to misleading. Nonetheless, we have taken the SomerStat data and included more selective categories to arrive at staff per 10,000 population. As can be seen in the table, Somerville is higher than five of the communities but lower than one community, New Bedford. We don't believe it is reasonable to draw any conclusions based on this data.

Table 9
Building Department Survey *

	Amesbury	Fall River	New Bedford	Newton	Providence	Somerville	Springfield
General Building Code Enforcement	Inspectional Services (1)	Inspectional Services (3)	Inspectional Services (9)	Inspectional Services (5)	Inspectional Services (11)	Inspectional Services (7.5)	Inspectional Services (8.8)
Plumbing and Gasfitting	Inspectional Services (.5)	Inspectional Services (2)	Inspectional Services (2)	Inspectional Services (2)	Inspectional Services (4)	Inspectional Services (1)	Inspectional Services (3.7)
Wire Inspections	Inspectional Services (.5)	Inspectional Services (1)	Inspectional Services (1)	Inspectional Services (2)	Inspectional Services (3)	Public Works (1)	Inspectional Services (4)
Population	16,450	91,079	92,538	82,819	175,255	74,554	151,176
Building Code Staff	2	6	12	9	18	10	17
Staff per 10K Pop	1.21	0.66	1.30	1.10	1.02	1.27	1.10

*Source: SomerStat

C. BUILDING PLAN CHECK TIMES

We have obtained some national data published in a Municipal Benchmark book. This data is shown in some of the following tables. Table 10 below shows the review times for building permits for commercial buildings as well as residential buildings. Somerville and Massachusetts used 30 days as a standard. The table indicates that for commercial buildings only four communities require the 30 days. All the others, 83%, require substantially less time than the 30 days. We discuss our recommendations elsewhere in this report.

The second part of the table shows the times for residential buildings. Only two of the 26 communities use the equivalent of 30 days. The remaining 24, or 92%, require substantially less time. As with commercial plan check times, we have made recommendations for residential plan check times elsewhere in this report.

Table 10
Review Time for Building Permits

City	Notes
Commercial Buildings	
Orlando, FL	Percentage of major plans reviewed within 4 days: 92% (1994), 68% (1996) Percentage of minor plans reviewed within 3 days: 95% (1994), 92% (1996)
Denton, TX	Target: 4 workdays - Actual: 61% within 4 workdays (1997)
High Point, NC	Target: Within 5 business days - Actual: 90% (1998)
Ocala, FL	Target: Within 1 week
Plano, TX	Actual: 6- day average (1997)
Norman, OK	Percentage reviewed within 20 days: 100% (1998) - Average: 6.73 days (1997)
Savannah, GA	Target: 7 days (if 3 stories or less); 10 days (4-7 stories); 14 days (if high-rise) Actual averages: 7, 10, and 14 days (1990); 7, 10, and 14 days (1991)
Tallahassee, FL	Target: Within 8 days - Actual: 71% (1991)
Winston-Salem, NC	Target: Within 9 days - Actual: 69% (1997), 67% (1998)
Cary, NC	Target: Within 9 workdays - Actual: 15% (1999)
Lubbock, TX	Actual: 100% within 10 working days (1991)
Irving, TX	Target: Within 10 working days - Actual: 95% (1991)
Oklahoma City, OK	Percentage reviewed within 10 working days: 83% (1999) - Percentage of code reviews for remodels within 5 working days: 89% (1999)
Alexandria, VA	10-day average (1998)
Grand Prairie, TX	Actual: 100% reviewed within 14 days; 85% issued within 14 days (1998)
Ames, IA	Percentage of all building permits (commercial and residential issued within 15 days: 85% (1997)
Raleigh, NC	Actual: small commercial - 5.8 days (1997), 13 days (1998); medium commercial - 11.2 days (1997), 19 days (1998); large commercial - 17.6 days (1997), 26 days (1998)
Tempe, AZ	Target: Within 15 days - Actual: 21-day average (1997)
Fort Collins, CO	Target: Within average of 3 weeks - Actual: 3-week average (1991))
Glendale, AZ	Percentage reviewed within 22 workdays: 97% (1997)
Reno, NV	Target: Review permit applications for at least 60% of new commercial buildings and 90% of remodelings within 4 weeks (1999)
San Diego, CA	Actual: 90% of commercial plan checks within 30 days; 92% of multifamily plan checks within 30 days (1998)
Eugene, OR	Target: Within 63 calendar days (8 weeks)

City	Notes
Residential Buildings	
Anaheim, CA	Target: Same-day turnaround on minor residential and tenant improvement building permits
Fayetteville, AR	Actual: 100% within 8 working hours (1991)
Savannah, GA	Target: Within 1 day for single-family and duplex; 7 days for triplex and quad; 10 days for apartments - Actual 99%, 99% and 100% (1991); 99%, 85% and 85% (1992)
College Station, TX	Percentage of single family permits issued within 24 hours: 95% (1998) Percentage within 5 days: 100% (1998)
Denton, TX	Target: Within 2 workdays - Actual: 98% (1997)
Ocala, FL	Target: Within 2 days
Orlando, FL	100% within 2.1 days (1994); 100% within 2.3 days (1996)
High Point, NC	Target: single- and two-family within 2 business days; multifamily within 5 business days - Actual: 90% within targeted time frame (1998)
Charlotte, NC	Cycle time for normal permit review: 2.5 days (1998)
Winston-Salem, NC	Target: Issue at least 90% of all building permits for single-family construction within 3 working days - Actual: 98% (1997), 100% (1998)
Irving, TX	Target: Within 3 workdays - Actual: 98% (1991)
Grand Prairie, TX	Actual: 100% reviewed within 5 days; 92% issued within 3 days (1998)
Hurst, TX	Target: Review plans and issue permit within an average of 3 days - Actual: 3-day average (1997)
Plano, TX	Actual: 3-day average (1997)
Cary, NC	Target: Within 72 hours - Actual: 20% (1999)
Durham, NC	Percentage reviewed within 4 workdays: 90% (1999)
Grants Pass, OR	Target: At least 90% processed within 1 week (1997)
Norman, OK	Percentage reviewed within 5 days: 66% (1998) Average: 4.53 (1997)
San Diego, CA	Actual: 59% of residential plan checks within 8 days (1998)
Cincinnati, OH	Target: Within 10 workdays, if 20 dwelling units or less - Actual: 100%, with an average review time of 7 workdays (1995)
Alexandria, VA	10-day average (1998)
Tempe, AZ	Target: Within 8 days - Actual: 11-day average (1997)
Raleigh, NC	Actual: 14-day average (1997), 9-day average (1998)
Glendale, AZ	Percentage reviewed within 16 workdays: 95% (1997)
Reno, NV	Target: Review permit applications for at least 90% of new residential units and 95% of remodelings within 4 weeks (1999)
Eugene, OR	Target: Within 30 calendar days (6 weeks)
Source: David N. Ammons <i>Municipal Benchmarks</i> , Sage Publications, 2001	

D. BUILDING INSPECTION TIMES

The national standard for responding to building inspection requests in the next day. Many communities use a cut-off time of 4 p.m. Others will try to accommodate an inspection even if it's on the same day as requested. As can be seen in the table below, all communities but Norman, OK complete the inspections within 24 hours or less.

Table 11
Response to Requests for Building Construction Inspections

City	Notes
Fort Collins, Co	Actual: 3.5 hour average response time; 100% completed on the day requested (1991)
Oak Ridge, TN	Target: Within 4 hours of request (1997)
Flagstaff, AZ	Same-day service: 99% (1997)
Ocala, FL	Target: Same-day service
Corpus Christi, TX	Actual: 99% performed on the day requested (1991)
San Jose, CA	Actual: 99% on the day requested (1995)
Alexandria, VA	Percentage performed on the day requested: 98% (1998)
Raleigh, NC	Actual: 88% on the date requested (1997); 89% (1998)
Duncanville, TX	Actual: 97% within 8 hours of request (1998)
Hurst, TX	Target: Within 8 work hours of notice - Actual: 95% within 8 work hours (1997)
Norman, OK	Percentage performed on the same day (within 8 hours): 60% (1998); percentage performed within 48 hours: 90% (1998)
Chandler, AZ	Actual: 99% within 24 hours (1998)
San Clemente, CA	Percentage within 24 hours: 99% (1998)
College Station, TX	Percentage within 24 hours of request: 98% (1998)
Cary, NC	Actual: 97.5% within 24 hours of request (1999)
Glendale, AZ	Percentage performed within 24 hours of request: 97% (1997)
Tucson, AZ	95% of commercial inspections within 24 hours of request: 99% residential inspections within 24 hours of request (1998, estimated)

Source: David N. Ammons *Municipal Benchmarks*, Sage Publications, 2001

E. BUILDING INSPECTIONS PER INSPECTOR

Table 12 below shows inspections times per inspector in selected cities. We have averaged these in the last row. As can be seen, they range from a low of 4.94 for Fire Inspectors, to a high of 14.6 for Plumbing Inspectors. Building Inspectors averaged 13.9. Somerville has an unofficial practice that inspectors only conduct eight inspections per day. This is lower than our experience and is also lower than national standards. Our recommendations are discussed elsewhere in this report.

Table 12
Inspections per Inspector in Selected Cities

Average for All Types	Building / Construction Inspector	Electrical Inspector	Fire Inspector	Mechanical / HVAC Inspector	Plumbing Inspector	General Code Enforcement Inspector
Sterling Heights, MI	Shreveport, LA	Irving, TX	Savannah, GA	New Hanover County (Wilmington), NC	New Hanover County (Wilmington), NC	Savannah, GA
17 (1995)	16 (1991), 19 (1994)	12.3 (1991)	8 (1997)	14.9 (1998)	24.1 (1998)	Target: 15 code inspections/reinspections per day Actual: 18 (1990), 19 (1991)
Chesapeake, VA	Irving, TX	Lubbock, TX	New York, NY	Shreveport, LA	Irving, TX	San Antonio, TX
17 (1997)	16.3 (1991)	11 (1995), 12 (1997)	5.7 (1996), 5.6 (1997)	11 (1991), 12 (1994)	17.5 (1991)	11 (1995), 17.2 (1997)
San Antonio, TX	Lubbock, TX	New Hanover County (Wilmington), NC	Portland, OR	Greenville, SC	Lubbock, TX	Shreveport, LA
15.8 (1995), 16.5 (1997)	15 (1995), 16 (1997)	12 (1998)	2.12 (1991), 3.16 (1992 est.)	6.7 (1989), 6.3 (1990)	17 (1997)	12 (1991), 15 (1994)
Savannah, GA	New Hanover County (Wilmington), NC	Shreveport, LA	Bellevue, WA		Shreveport, LA	Charlotte, NC
7 (1997)	15.1 (1998)	10 (1991), 11 (1994)	3 (1997)		8 (1991), 12 (1994)	Target: 10 per inspector-day Actual: 10.4 (1987)
	San Clemente, CA	New York, NY			New York, NY	Chesapeake, VA
	Target: 12-14 (2000)	10.2 (1996), 9.3 (1997)			8.7 (1996), 11.1 (1997)	9 (1997)
	Greenville, SC	Greenville, SC			Greenville, SC	Greenville, SC
	8.2 (1989), 12.4 (1990)	9.3 (1989), 7.0 (1990)			4.3 (1989), 5.9 (1990)	General Inspector: 8.3 (1989), 7.7 (1990) Sign Inspector: 7.5 (1989), 6.7 (1990) Zoning Inspector: 17 (1990)
	College Station, TX					San Clemente, CA
	10.3 (1998)					Target: 4.5 (1999)
	New York, NY					
	8.9 (1996), 8.8 (1997)					
14.4 Ave	13.9 Ave	10.6 Ave	4.94 Ave	11.1 Ave	14.6 Ave	13.2 Ave

Source: David N. Ammons *Municipal Benchmarks*, Sage Publications, 2001

Matrix Consulting Group conducted some benchmarking as part of a study they conducted for Springfield. As can be seen in the Table, inspections per inspector per day range from 4.35 in Bridgeport to 13.5 in Stamford.

Table 13
Building Inspections per Inspector

Department	Average Inspections per Inspector per Day
Springfield Building *	12
Bridgeport Building *	4.35
Stamford Building *	13.5
Waterbury Department of Inspection *	7 - 10
Lowell Inspectional Services *	10
Average	9.57
Somerville ISD	8
* Source, Matrix Consulting Group	

The Table below shows SomerStat data for Plumbing and Gasfitting Inspectors. As can be seen, the average number of Plumbing and Gasfitting per staff member is 938 with Somerville exceeding that at 1,178.

The average for Electric Permits is 1,075 with Somerville exceeding that at 1,510.

Table 14
Plumbing & Gasfitting Inspections per Staff Member and Electric Permits per Staff Member

Municipality	Number of Plumbing & Gasfitting per Staff Member	Electric Permits per Staff Member
Amesbury	472	568
Fall River	N/A	N/A
New Bedford	713	1351
Newton	1717	1176
Providence	943	1257
Somerville	1178	1510
Springfield	606	587
Average	938	1075
*Source: SomerStat		

F. BUILDING PERMIT FEE COMPARISONS

Table 15 below uses a combination of data from Matrix Consulting and SomerStat to compare fees. The focus group members indicated that they thought Somerville fees tend to be high. The data in the table is somewhat inconclusive but does provide some indicators. Using a valuation of \$300,000 Somerville is substantially higher than Springfield at \$2,650 and Stamford between \$3,000 and \$4,800, but slightly lower than \$5,580 charged in Newton, \$6,020 in Bridgeport and \$6,005 in Waterbury. We then made a calculation based on a 2,500 square foot structure. Somerville's fee of \$713 is slightly above New Bedford at \$625. However, it is substantially below the fees for Springfield, Amesbury, and Fall River.

The fees for repairing a rear porch were \$51 for Somerville which exceeds the \$30 fee for Amesbury. However, the Somerville fee is below the fees for Springfield, New Bedford, Newton, and Fall River.

Renovation of two bathrooms in Somerville is \$425 which substantially exceeds that in Springfield, New Bedford, Amesbury and Fall River. However, it is below the \$465 fee in Newton.

The repair and renovation of kitchen, bathroom and roof is \$1,020 in Somerville compared to the lower fees in Springfield, New Bedford, Amesbury and Fall River. However, the fee of \$1,116 in Newton does exceed the Somerville fee.

Table 15
Fee Comparison

	Somerville**	Springfield**	New Bedford**	Newton**	Amesbury**	Fall River**	Bridgeport *	Stamford *	Waterbury *
Fee Formula	\$17.00 / \$1,000 construction value	New additions & construction of 1 & 2 families = \$250 + \$8 per \$1000. Major alterations & repairs of 1 & 2 family & is \$50 + .25 per square foot	Res 1 & 2 .25 sq ft 150 min. com. .45 sq ft 300 min	\$18.60 per \$1000 project cost	\$.45 per sq ft for new \$10 per \$1000 value for renovation	New construction - Residential \$.19/sq ft, Commercial \$.22/sq ft, Renovation \$1000 (job value) & below -\$46, \$1,001 - \$2,000 -\$52, \$2,001 - \$3,000 -\$58, \$3,001 - \$4,000 -\$64, \$4,001 - \$5,000 -\$70, \$5,001 - \$10,000 -\$75, over \$10,000 -- \$75 + \$9 per additional thousand	\$40 for first thousand valuation, \$20 for each additional thousand valuation	Permit Fees: \$10 per thousand for 1 & 2 families; \$16 per thousand for 3 families & commercial	\$25 for first thousand of estimated cost and \$20 for each additional thousand
\$300,000	\$5,100	\$2,650		\$5,580			\$6,020	\$3,000 to \$4,800	\$6,005
2500 sq ft	\$713	\$1,351	\$625		\$1,125	\$5,700			
Permit Fees for Sample Projects:									
Repairing rear porch, sf = 100sf, est. project value = \$3,000	\$51.00	\$75.00	\$150.00	\$55.80	\$30.00	\$58.00			
Revonaton of 2 bathrooms, sf = 100sf, est. project value = \$25,000	\$425.00	\$75.00	\$150.00	\$465.00	\$250.00	\$210.00			
Repair & renovaton of kitchen, bathroom & roof, sf = 800, est. project value = \$60,000	\$1,020.00	\$250.00	\$200.00	\$1,116.00	\$600.00	\$525.00			

*Source: Matrix Consulting

**SomerStat

G. HEALTH AND CODE ENFORCEMENT STAFFING

As can be seen in Table 16 below, Somerville staff per population is slightly higher than Fall River or New Bedford. However, as previously indicated, we feel that staff per population can be very misleading. Additionally, given the nature of Somerville and its code enforcement needs, we would expect to see this higher staffing number.

Table 16
Health & Code Enforcement Survey *

	Fall River	New Bedford	Somerville
Health Code Enforcement	Inspectional Services (3)	Inspectional Services (7)	Inspectional Services (5)
Local Code Enforcement	Inspectional Services (4)	Inspectional Services (2)	Services (2.5) and Public Works (2)
Total Staff	7	9	7.5
Population	91,079	92,538	74,554
Staff per 10K Pop	0.79	0.97	1.00

*Source: SomerStat

VIII. EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS

Two confidential questionnaires were completed by many of the employees in the Inspectional Services Division.

A short, closed-ended questionnaire (shown in Appendix B) was completed at a staff meeting by eleven employees and collected by the consultants. A few additional surveys from employees who could not attend the meeting were sent to Zucker Systems in San Diego. The raw scores and tallies of this survey are also shown in Appendix B.

A longer, eight-page questionnaire (shown in Appendix C) was completed by four employees and mailed or emailed to the consultants in San Diego to assure confidentiality. Information obtained from these questionnaires was essential to our analysis. The number of questionnaires returned is shown in Table 17. In most of our studies, only half of the employees that complete the short questionnaire take the time to complete the long questionnaire.

Table 17
Number of Employees Responding to Questionnaires

Function	Number of Short Questionnaires	Average Response to Short Questionnaire	Number of Responses With Averages Under 3.0	Number of Long Questionnaires
Building Unit	5	3.67	5	0 (5 were distributed)
Health Unit	6	4.21	0	4 (6 were distributed)

The short questionnaire also asked employees to list pet peeves and give suggestions for improvements. These comments were used as part of our analysis for this report and are shown in Appendix B.

The short, closed-ended questionnaire consisted of a series of statements to be rated by the respondents. Responses were tallied and averaged and the raw scores are displayed in Appendix B. The statements were designed to elicit the mood and feelings of each employee about overall division or department excellence. For each of the 28 statements, the employee was asked to respond as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 – Strongly Disagree | 4 – Somewhat Agree |
| 2 – Somewhat Disagree | 5 – Strongly Agree |
| 3 – Neutral | 6 – Not Applicable |

Generally, the higher the rating (i.e., 4's and 5's) the better the employee perceives the subject area and the more excellent the division or department.

We've conducted this survey in many Inspectional Services Divisions. Generally, a score below 3.0 is an indication of issues that need to be addressed. We like to see average scores in the high 3's and 4's. We believe that the scores give a reasonably accurate assessment of the employee's view of their division or department.

Building Unit

The average score for the Building Unit was 3.67 which normally indicates relatively satisfied employees. However, low scores were received on five questions as follows:

Staffing

Question 16. *I have enough time to do my work as it needs to be done.* The average score was 1.50. Four of the employees scored this question "1" one employee "2" and one employee "3". No one scored above "3". We have discussed staffing needs in other parts of this report.

Management

Question 6. *Managers in the Inspectional Services Division encourage and advance new ideas from employees.* This was scored 2.0. Only one employee scored this question above "3".

Question 17. *I am kept abreast of changes that affect me.* This was scored 2.67. Only two of the employees scored this above 3.0.

Question 4. *The concern for employees in the Inspectional Services Division feels genuine.* This was scored 2.83. Three of the employees scored this above 3.0 and three below 3.0.

These are serious responses that deserve clear attention. Since there is a new Superintendent, it is difficult to determine if this relates to the current management or previous management.

101. ***Recommendation:*** The ISD Superintendent should discuss the low responses to Questions 4, 6, and 17 in a staff meeting and brainstorm with employees how to best address their concerns.

Training

Question 7. *We have a strong emphasis on training in the Inspectional Services Division.* This was scored 2.83. Three of the employees scored this above 3.0 and

three below 3.0. Training will be discussed in other parts of this report. It is a particularly important topic since many of the changes recommended in this report will require increased staff training.

Health Unit

The average score for the Health Unit was 4.21 which normally indicates relatively satisfied employees. Low scores were received on four questions however most employees answered N/A on these questions and thus they are not relevant.

IX. CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS

In today's environment, governmental performance is measured by customer satisfaction. In order to determine the Inspectional Services Division performance, we used several techniques consisting of interviews with the Mayor and several Alderman, two customer focus groups, and a mail surveys to building permit applicants.

This Chapter includes customer comments for improving the City's Inspectional Services Division. The intent of this customer input was to elicit views and opinions on positive and negative aspects of activities and to seek ideas for change that will improve and enhance the Division. However, as would be expected, the focus was on perceived problems.

In considering the results, the reader must bear in mind that, unlike documents and statistics, the views expressed by individuals are subjective and may reflect personal biases. Nonetheless, these views are at least as important as objective material because it is these people, with their feelings and prejudices that work with or are often affected by City activities. A second important consideration is that in analyzing the material, it may not be as important to determine whether a particular response is "correct" as it is to simply accept a response or try to determine why customers feel the way they do. Tom Peters, the noted management consultant, has said that in relation to customer service, "Perception is everything." In other words, perception is reality to the person holding the perception.

It should be noted that the purpose of this Chapter is to report on the customer input so that the reader of the report can view the comments as customer perceptions without our editing. These comments are not the conclusions of the consultants. Using our methodology as described in Figure 1 and Section B of Chapter II, the customer comments are taken as one form of input to be merged by input of others and our own judgment. Our specific response is in the form of the various recommendations included in this report.

A. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

We met the Mayor and three Alderman in individual confidential meetings in order to gain a perspective on the governmental direction for the City and views about the Inspectional Services Division. There was not unanimous opinion on all topics but a few points of interest follow.

Overall Direction

There is a desire to have Inspectional Services Division become a “model agency”. This will require breaking the status quo, better training, new technology, hand-held computers and various improvements

Enforcement

There is a desire for better and increased enforcement. Issues include:

- Lack of follow up enforcement after the first warning
- Understaffed
- Lack of staffing for nights and weekends
- Delay of two or three days to check on complaint

NIT Team

The NIT team approach is seen as very useful. However, it could be utilized more and can be more aggressive.

OSPCD

There appear to be communication gaps between OSPCD and the Inspectional Services Division. Some wonder if Inspectional Services Division should be in OSPCD. Options would include being a separate department, or returned to Public Works or Health.

B. FOCUS GROUPS

Thirteen people who had been applicants in the City’s Inspectional Services Division process met in two groups on July 14 for two hours at the Central Library Conference Room. The meeting was held in confidence and no staff members were present except for a representative of SomerStat. The groups included an attorney, architects, builders, business owners, contractors, developers and residents. Focus group comments are included below. Topics are arranged in alphabetical order.

Overview

Given the magnitude of the demand, some feel that Inspectional Services Division does a good job.

Alderman

There is too much interference in the process from Alderman.

Clerks

The Clerks are good.

Computerization

Computerizing the process will be difficult and some don't see the need for it.

Counter - Inspectional Services Division

Staff does not communicate well at the front counter. There is "a lot of double" talk. One person was told it would be 10 days for a plan check. Later, the person was told it will be three to four weeks. There are no checklists of the process or requirements – generally a lack of information. Opinions keep changing. Sometimes it is like a group discussion that lacks direction. Non-English speakers tend to get a runaround.

Electrical Inspection

Electrical inspections are a big problem. They are inconsistent, will flag everything, "it is like walking on eggs."

Fees

Inspectional Services Division fees are some of the highest in the State.

Fire

Fire is generally responsive in plan check but it is the final that is important and they may change their mind. It was suggested that the Fire Marshall should do an inspection in the rough. Inspectional Services Division won't give the plans to Fire, you have to go to them yourself.

Inspections

Inspections are generally made within a day or two after being requested.

Inspector Conflict of Interest

An inspector told an applicant who they should hire for their project. When the contractor did not perform well, the inspector suggested another contractor who also did not perform well. The Department of Public Works does give you a list of contractors.

Inspectors

There is some inconsistency amongst inspectors, particularly between seasoned inspectors and new inspectors. Some inspectors do only a superficial inspection and are in and out in 30 seconds.

Permits

Given the problems in Inspectional Services Division, many clients don't want to pull permits.

Personal Relations

A number of the focus group members have done projects in Somerville for many years and know the inspectors. As such they don't have many problems in dealing with the Inspectional Services Division. Others suggested that you shouldn't have to have personal relations in order to get good service. It is not just a "who do you know" issue but it is also a trust issue. Some suggested that in interviewing contractors, they generally don't tell you what they can do or the quality of their work, instead it is all about who they know in the Inspectional Services Division.

Phone Calls

Staff will return your phone calls.

Plan Review

Plan Review generally takes too long. Inspectional Services Division may be understaffed in relation to plan review. The Division tends to hide behind the State laws 30 day timeline. Plans may need to cycle two or three times and each time could take 30 days. Other cities where focus group members work tend to meet the 30 day timeline. The large and small projects seem to end up in the same review stack. The timelines are always in flex. Inspectional Services Division relies primarily on one person for plan check with little back up.

Planning

Because of out-of-date zoning, many applications are for non-conforming properties and the application needs to go the Board of Appeals or Planning Board, which is a time delay. However, Inspectional Services Division is not consistent as to if you need to go to a board. There is a different reading of the code between Planning and the Inspectional Services Division. Some thought that having both Planning and Inspectional Services Division in OSPCD would mean they would talk with one voice.

Taxes

You have to go to City Hall to get a stamp that taxes are paid, but Inspectional Services Division could just pull it up on the computer.

Zoning Review

An applicant can pay a \$1 per \$1,000 fee for a zoning review but can't rely on the zoning review.

Appendix A

Persons Interviewed

Assessor

Marc A. Levy, Chief Assessor

Auditor

Colleen Tam, Internal Auditor

Constituent Services Department

Steve Craig – Director

Fire Department

Capt. Bill Lee Fire Prevention

Health Department

Paulette Renault-Caragianes, Director (pending)

Information Office

Karthik Viswanarhan

Inspectional Services Division

Edward Nuzzo, Superintendent

Anthony Sillari, Plumbing Inspector

Paul Nonni, Sr. Building Inspector

Kelly Como, Principal Clerk

Patty Belyea, Senior Clerk

John Driscoll, Building Inspector

Luis Waldron, Building Inspector

Leo Karapetian, Building Inspector

Frank Keohane, Chief Code Enforcement Inspector

Michelle Bowler, Senior Code Inspector

Guy Selfridge, Senior Code Inspector

Russell Koty, Code Enforcement Inspector

Joe Oliveira, Code Enforcement Inspector

Donna Pickett – Clerical Staff

Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development

Monica Lamboy, Executive Director

George Proakis, Director of Planning

Dan Federico, Director Admin and Finance

Brianna O'Brien, Administrative Assistance (pending) Rob May – Director of Economic Development.

Personnel Department

Jessie C. Baker, Director

Public Works Department

Stan Koty, DPW Commissioner, (pending)

John Power, Electrical Inspector

Rob King, Director of Engineering

SomerStat Program

Angela Morin Allen, Senior Analyst

Appendix B

Employee Short Questionnaire

**City Somerville, Massachusetts
Inspectional Services Division – Organizational Review**

EMPLOYEE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please check your Section

- ☐ Building Inspection
- ☐ Code Enforcement
- ☐ Clerical
- ☐ Other (list) _____

In the boxes below, enter the appropriate number for each statement according to this guide.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 – Strongly Disagree | 4 – Somewhat Agree |
| 2 – Somewhat Disagree | 5 – Strongly Agree |
| 3 – Neutral | 6 – Not Applicable |

-
- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. The Inspectional Services Division seeks to identify problems quickly. | [] |
| 2. When problems are identified, the Inspectional Services Division moves quickly to solve them. | [] |
| 3. The Inspectional Services Division has an effective process for listening to citizen or client concerns. | [] |
| 4. The concern for employees in the Inspectional Services Division is more than lip service. | [] |
| 5. Good service is the rule rather than the exception in the Inspectional Services Division. | [] |
| 6. Managers in the Inspectional Services Division encourage and advance new ideas from employees. | [] |
| 7. We have a strong emphasis on training in the Inspectional Services Division. | [] |
| 8. Management in the Inspectional Services Division discusses objectives, programs and results with employees regularly. | [] |

9. There is free and open communication in the Inspectional Services Division between all levels of employees about the work they are performing. []
10. Employees in the Inspectional Services Division treat citizens with respect. []
11. The Inspectional Services Division encourages practical risk-taking and supports positive effort. []
12. The Inspectional Services Division has a clear sense of what its programs are trying to accomplish. []
13. We do our jobs very well in the Inspectional Services Division. []
14. We have an efficient records management and documentation system in the Inspectional Services Division. []
15. I am satisfied with the type of leadership I have been receiving from my supervisor in the Inspectional Services Division. []
16. I have enough time to do my work as it needs to be done. []
17. I am kept abreast of changes that affect me. []
18. There is good teamwork and communication between the different departments, divisions or organizations conducting development review, plan checking and inspection in the City. []
19. I am aware of standard turnaround times in the Inspectional Services Division for plans and permits as communicated by my supervisor. []
20. I am able to meet standard turnaround times for plans and permits in the Inspectional Services Division as communicated by my supervisor. []
21. The City has a coordinated development review and plan checking process. []
22. The building permit processes in the City are not unnecessarily complex nor burdensome on the applicant. []
23. Building permits are reviewed in a consistent manner. []

25. Building permits are reviewed in a timely manner. []
25. It should be the policy of the City and its employees to assist any applicant in completing his/her application, see that it is complete as soon as possible, and process it without undue delay. []
26. It should be the policy of the City to make the building permit process as pleasant and expeditious as possible. []
27. Field inspections in the Inspectional Services Division are undertaken in a consistent manner. []
28. The Inspectional Services Division and the Fire Department work well together []
29. The Inspectional Services Division and the Planning Division work well together. []
30. The Inspectional Services Division's Code Enforcement works well. []

Please briefly answer the following:

31. Please list any "pet peeves" or concerns about your job, the Strategic Planning and Community Development Department, the Inspectional Services Division or the City.
32. Please provide at least one suggestion or recommendation for improvement related to your job, the Strategic Planning and Community Development Department, the Inspectional Services Division or the City.

C. BUILDING INSPECTION

Question #31

Please list any “pet peeves” or concerns about your job, the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, the Inspectional Services Division or the City.

1. No (hostess) information desk?
2. Poor working conditions, underpaid and understaffed.

Question #32

Please provide at least one suggestion or recommendation for improvement related to your job the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, the Inspectional Services Division or the City.

1. Different Definition between Planning and community and Inspectional Services Division – very important.
2. More room to work.
3. ISD should be a line department reporting directly to the mayor.
4. Remove some items which need two bath approval and just charge more for permit. Need zoning administrator, job listed never filled in 30 years.
5. More staff (help).

Table B – 1
Building Inspection Staff Questionnaire Responses

	Emp #1	Emp #2	Emp #3	Emp #4	Emp #5	Emp #6	Ave
#1	5	5	5	5	5	3	4.67
#2	5	5	5	5	5	3	4.67
#3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00
#4	4	5	1	1	5	1	2.83
#5	3	5	4	5	5	5	4.50
#6	3	5	1	1	1	1	2.00
#7	4	5	2	2	3	1	2.83
#8	4	5	1	1	5	3	3.17
#9	3	5	4	4	5	5	4.33
#10	5	4	5	5	5	5	4.83
#11	4	5	5	2	1	N/A	3.40
#12	5	4	2	3	5	3	3.67
#13	5	4	5	5	5	5	4.83
#14	4	4	1	4	1	4	3.00
#15	2	4	4	5	5	4	4.00
#16	2	3	1	1	1	1	1.50
#17	5	3	2	1	1	4	2.67
#18	3	5	2	2	4	3	3.17
#19	4	5	5	3	5	4	4.33
#20	3	5	2	4	5	4	3.83
#21	3	5	2	4	N/A	3	3.40
#22	4	5	4	4	1	2	3.33
#23	4	4	5	5	5	3	4.33
#24	5	5	4	5	5	3	4.50
#25	5	5	2	3	1	3	3.17
#26	5	5	2	5	1	5	3.83
#27	3	4	1	5	1	5	3.17
#28	4	5	1	5	5	5	4.17
#29	3	4	1	5	5	1	3.17
#30	4	5	2	4	5	3	3.83
Ave	3.93	4.60	2.87	3.63	3.66	3.34	3.67

D. CODE ENFORCEMENT

Question #31

Please list any “pet peeves” or concerns about your job, the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, the Inspectional Services Division or the City.

1. Need a full time sanitary inspector doing two jobs; Code Enforcement and Sanitary.
2. We used to have more inspectors to cover various complaints.

Question #32

Please provide at least one suggestion or recommendation for improvement related to your job the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, the Inspectional Services Division or the City.

1. Having the proper tools to do the job!
2. Cross training and equipment.
3. Identify develop policies related to environmental health. Develop communication lines with Director or Public Health. Identify/hire staff. Interview and training program.
4. Additional help.

Computers to work faster when looking up where owners of property live

Table B – 2
Code Enforcement Staff Questionnaire Responses

	Emp #1	Emp #2	Emp #3	Emp #4	Emp #5	Ave
#1	5	5	N/A	5	5	5.00
#2	4	5	5	5	5	4.80
#3	4	5	5	4	5	4.60
#4	4	5	5	5	4	4.60
#5	5	5	1	5	5	4.20
#6	3	5	5	4	5	4.40
#7	4	4	1	3	5	3.40
#8	2	5	5	4	5	4.20
#9	N/A	5	N/A	N/A	5	5.00
#10	N/A	5	5	5	5	5.00
#11	N/A	4	2	4	5	3.75
#12	N/A	5	2	5	5	4.25
#13	N/A	5	2	5	5	4.25
#14	N/A	4	N/A	3	4	3.67
#15	N/A	5	5	4	5	4.75
#16	N/A	4	1	2	5	3.00
#17	N/A	5	5	3	4	4.25
#18	N/A	5	5	2	5	4.25
#19	N/A	N/A	5	3	N/A	4.00
#20	N/A	N/A	4	4	N/A	4.00
#21	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	2.00
#22	N/A	N/A	2	2	N/A	2.00
#23	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	2.00
#24	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	4.00
#25	4	5	5	4	5	4.60
#26	N/A	5	N/A	5	N/A	5.00
#27	N/A	5	1	5	5	4.00
#28	4	5	5	5	5	4.80
#29	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	2.00
#30	4	5	N/A	5	5	4.75
Ave	3.91	4.83	3.62	3.83	4.86	4.21

Appendix C

Employee Long Questionnaire

City of Somerville

Inspectional Services Division - Organizational Review

EMPLOYEE QUESTIONNAIRE

Employee Name _____ Job Title _____

The following questionnaire is an important and essential part of the Inspectional Services Division Organizational Review being conducted by Zucker Systems for the City of Somerville. The study is aimed at improving effectiveness and efficiency. Your ideas and thoughts are essential to the study. This questionnaire will supplement other work being undertaken by the consultants.

Please complete this questionnaire and return it to us within one week. You can do this in one of two ways:

1. The best way to complete the questionnaire is on line at www.zuckersystems.com. You will find the questionnaire under "links" on our web site. If you have any problems call us at 619-260-2680.
2. You can also mail the questionnaire in a sealed envelope to Zucker Systems, 3038 ½ Udall St., San Diego, CA 92106.

Take your time in answering the questions and be as complete as possible. You are encouraged to include attachments or examples. Note that all questions may not apply to you. In that case, simply skip that question.

Your comments may be merged with others and included in our report; however, the consultants will not identify individuals in relation to specific comments. Your responses and comments will be held in confidence.

Thank you for your help.

Paul C. Zucker, President, Zucker Systems

-
1. What do you see as the major **strengths** of the Inspectional Services Division's processes or organization, the things you do well?
 2. What do you see as the major **weaknesses** of the Inspectional Services Division's processes or organization, and what can be done to eliminate these weaknesses?

3. What important policies, services or programs are no longer pursued or have never been pursued that you feel should be added?
4. Do you feel any of the City's or Inspectional Services Division's ordinances, policies, plans, or procedures should be changed? If so, list them and explain why.
5. Are there any programs, activities or jobs you would eliminate or reduce and why?
6. How would you describe the goals or mission of your function?
7. What would help you perform your specific duties more effectively and efficiently?
8. What problems, if any, do you experience with your records or files and what should be done to eliminate these problems? (Please be specific.)
9. Are there any problems in providing good service to applicants or customers? If so, please list them and give recommendations to solve these problems.
10. Do you feel that any of the processes should be shortened, sped up or simplified? If so, what do you suggest? Or conversely, do you feel that you try to move applications through the process too quickly? In either case, how would you suggest it be improved?

11. What suggestions do you have for improving communication in the Inspectional Services Division, or the City?
12. Do you have any difficulty in carrying out your functions due to problems with other Departments or Divisions? If so, please explain and provide suggestions on how to correct these problems.
13. Have you received sufficient training for your responsibilities? If not, please comment and indicate areas you would like more training.
14. What functions are you currently handling manually that you believe could or should be automated? (Please be specific.)
15. What functions that are currently computer-automated need improvement? List your suggested improvements.
16. What problems, if any, do you have with the telephone system and what would you suggest to correct the problems?
17. What problems, if any, do you have with the email system and what do you suggest to correct these problems?
18. Do you have all the equipment you need to properly do your job? If not, please list what you need.

19. Please provide comments concerning good or bad aspects of the City's organizational structure for Inspectional Services Division, the Strategic Planning & Community Development Department or other related departments or divisions. Provide any suggestions for improvement or changes.

20. Do you use consultants or should consultants be used for any of the Inspectional Services Division's processes or functions?

21. If you use consultants for any of the Inspectional Services Division's processes or functions, what problems, if any, do you experience with these consultants and what would you recommend to correct this problem?

22. If you are short of time to do your work, what changes would you recommend to correct this problem?

23. Please list the major tasks or work activity you undertake and provide a rough estimated percentage of your time for each task. The percentages should total 100%.

<u>Task</u>	<u>Percent</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
	100%

24. What additional handouts to the public or changes to existing handouts to the public would be helpful?

25. What changes if any would you recommend for the Inspectional Services Division's webpage, the City's web page or e-government applications?
26. What changes, if any, would you recommend in relation to the City's computer permitting system?
27. Do relations between the office staff and inspectors work well? If not, what do you recommend to improve the relations?
28. Who is your direct supervisor?
29. List the names of the staff that you supervise.
30. List any other topics you would like the consultants to consider, or other suggestions you have for the Inspectional Services Division, the Strategic Planning & Community Development Department, other departments, or the City. Take your time and be as expansive as possible.

Note: We will interview many, but possibly not all, staff. If you would like a confidential interview we will try to do so. Let us know by phone, email or in person. Also, feel free to call us at 1.619.260.2680 or email to paul@zuckersystems.com to discuss any concerns or provide recommendations. When calling, ask for Paul.