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Press Release
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LATEST TECHNOLOGY IS POWERFUL ENFORCEMENT TOOL

Up until last week, City Inspectional Services Department (ISD), consisting of Code Enforcement, Building and Health Department officials, relied on the tried and true method of pencil, paper and an outdated database program to keep track of many building, health and code violations.

That all changed on Monday.

Armed with the latest in handheld electronics, Everett officials now have the power of technology to enforce, monitor, and track building, code, fire and health department violations. Using updated software and hardware from GeoTMS, Code Enforcement, Building, Health, Fire and Police Department inspectors and officers will be able to work together quickly and accurately.

“Everett is one of just a few municipalities that is leading the way in leveraging the latest handheld computer and portable printer technology,” says John Field, Everett Chief Building Inspector, “this will greatly increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the ISD field inspectors. These tools are faster, feature laden and more rugged than any other handheld computers on the market. They will help reduce time spent travelling between the inspection sites and City Hall, keeping inspectors in the field, where they make the most difference. Any inspector can perform any inspection anywhere at anytime. Once uploaded, the inspection results are available for anyone to see, throughout the network.”

According to their website, Franklin, Massachusetts based GeoTMS (www.geotms.com/geotms) “is a complete land-management software package designed for local government agencies who are looking to electronically process and track information such as applications, permits, inspections and licenses. GeoTMS is a Windows-based product that integrates database applications into one integrated,

networked solution.” This new integration gives all City departments access to important land management issues, allowing for more collaboration and insuring that all land use decisions are made using the most current information available.

Each inspector, armed with a handheld device or vehicle with a mobile computer will be able to quickly and easily look up information about a questionable property. Up until this week, inspectors would have to search multiple databases to research a property, spending additional time in the office, rather than in the field. Code Enforcement, Health Department, Fire and Police officers and officials can enter an address in the device or on the web, look at any history of violations and immediately cite or fine an offender.

Mayor DeMaria is thrilled with the installation of the newest technology, “Since the day we took office, our focus has been to rid ourselves of the blight we see in this city,” says Mayor DeMaria, “as I said earlier this year, it’s the ignorance of a few who treat this city poorly, now we are going to change all of that.”

The Mayor is equally impressed with the cost.

Working closely with Community Development, ISD and GeoTMS, the city made an arrangement to pay for the database upgrade and the handheld units from a percentage of the collected fees. Taxpayers will feel no impact from the new and improved tools. What impressed the Mayor even more, the handheld computers and portable printers for ISD officials were purchased through a grant, costing the taxpayers nothing.

A Change in Technology Changes Everything

With the incorporation of the GeoTMS upgrade and deployment on a city-wide basis, the city will also be able to change the ways in which departments work. The Building Department will start issuing a newer style permit. Each permit will have a distinct barcode, which the inspector can scan with the mobile device and easily view a complete history of inspections. The Building Department official can easily use the mobile device to record inspection results electronically, increasing the efficiency and accuracy of inspections, allowing contractors to continue with the work.

This is the first step along the way of upgrading the Information Technology systems in the ISD,” notes John Field, “It is vital that all departments can view major projects. With a system-wide tool like GeoTMS, project approvals can flow smoothly. Once we have entire deployment of the system, we will be able to increase the speed at which projects get approved and also reduce the costs associated with the larger projects.”

The last step in this upgrade will be to offer online permit applications as well as online issuance of some simple permits. In the next few weeks, permit applicants will be able to visit the City of Everett’s website to check permit status, as well as inspection results.

From the Code Enforcement side, an official in the field can take a picture of a violation with the handheld device, electronically attach that picture to the Notice of Violation file ,

look up the address complete with homeowner information and issue a Notice of Violation to the offending property owner. Code Enforcement officials will have portable printers which will immediately print a ticket on-the-spot noting the fine and a detailed description of the actual city ordinance the offender violated.

Once a series of inspections are complete the ISD official returns to the office and uploads the information from the device into the central GeoTMS database. Back in the office, administrators can monitor activity, generate letters, late notices and reports on a property, increasing the accuracy and efficiency of enforcement. The company is in the process of incorporating the GeoTMS database with the Assessors database and other systems, which offers the city greater means of tracking properties, fees, fines and violations. The GeoTMS system has the ability to notify City employees of these outstanding issues before any activity commences.

In an instance where a property owner has many unpaid violations, the City can proceed with enforcing the new Municipal Lien Ordinance, another tool in the fight against blight in the city.

Mayor DeMaria is confident this new system will continue the fight against illegal rooming houses, dilapidated property and basic code enforcement violations. “We now have the tools to get ahead of the game” says Mayor DeMaria, “we’ve been sending a strong message to these property owners that we mean business, now we have even more muscle to back it up, we need to revive our neighborhoods and by getting rid of those who don’t care, Everett will continue to be a great place to live.”

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