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Glassman Administration Plans Cost-Saving Restructuring with New “Permit Center” to Improve Service, Productivity

BEL AIR, Md., (June 16, 2015) - To improve service and productivity, the Glassman administration will begin this summer to restructure Harford County government – literally.

County Executive Barry Glassman announced on Tuesday that the county Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits would be moving downstairs to the ground floor of the County Administration Building, where a more open workspace will be constructed to help citizens get everything from dog licenses to commercial construction permits, more conveniently than ever before. The move to create a “Permit Center” is the first phase of a major restructuring planned to make better use of county-owned facilities and save taxpayer money by reducing leased space. There will be no disruption in county services during construction of the Permit Center, which is expected to open by Labor Day.

“The new Permit Center reflects my administration’s focus on customer service,” said County Executive Glassman. “Locating the Center on our ground floor in a new workspace will improve transparency and productivity as we work to expedite permit approvals and licensing. Most importantly, it will save time and legwork for our homeowners, pet owners, contractors and businesses. As much as possible, our goal is to create a one-stop-shop for our valued customers.”

Currently, citizens seeking permits or licenses have to go up the second floor of the County Administration Building in Bel Air to fill out their applications. They then go downstairs to make

payments at the first floor Treasury window, and go back upstairs again to show their receipts and collect newly issued permits or licenses. After the Permit Center opens on the first floor, citizens will simply walk down the hall to the Treasury window.

Inside the new Permit Center, citizens will be welcome to sit with a one-on-one guide who will help them through the permit process, from application to review and approval. In addition, the county employees who review applications will no longer be hidden from view and isolated in cubicles. Instead, the open floor plan will allow employees to coordinate and expedite their workflow as a team. For applications that can be fully reviewed at the County Administration Building, the Permit Center will streamline the process further by including representatives from the other county departments involved in permit approvals: the Department of Public Works and the Department of Planning and Zoning.

“I am excited about the open workspace that will allow us to offer more efficient and personalized service to the many citizens who come to our offices each day,” said Paul Lawder, director of the Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits.

The Board of Estimates on Tuesday approved the contract award to construct the new Permit Center, including new energy efficient windows on the first floor of the County Administration Building. The new windows will save money on heating and air conditioning by replacing storefront windows installed with the original building in 1968. The \$397,000 contract for the Permit Center and first floor windows was awarded to Centennial Contractors Enterprises as part of the purchasing cooperative National Joint Powers Alliance’s construction contract. Through the same contract vehicle, the Board of Estimates also awarded a \$486,000 contract to Centennial to replace the building’s deteriorating mansard roof and third floor windows, which will be funded from the county’s capital budget for regular maintenance of county facilities.

Once the Permit Center project is complete, additional phases of the building restructuring project are planned, including relocating the second-floor public conference room to the first floor, and relocating the Treasury payment window to the Main Street side of the first floor, which will provide better public access and security oversight.

Both the Permit Center and subsequent phases of the restructuring project will be funded with savings from leases terminated at two locations, and their respective operations moved to county-owned facilities. The Department of Human Resources at 112 Hays Street will move to the first floor of the County Administration Building at 220 S. Main St., saving \$75,700 annually. In addition, the Department of Public Works Construction Management Division will leave 15 N. Bond Street, and its capital projects functions will move to the County Administration Building; the remaining functions will be housed at the county’s “black box” building at 212 S. Bond St.,

saving \$150,948 per year. The combined savings of \$226,648 will more than offset \$197,986 in annual debt service on \$2.5 million in bonds to pay for the project, for a net annual savings of \$28,662.

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