

# NEWS



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## CROW WING COUNTY DRT PROCESS RECEIVES POSITIVE REVIEWS

Planning and Zoning applicants are pleased with a new review process established by Crow Wing County, according to a survey released by the County's Land Services Department.

The survey, conducted in January, polled persons who participated in the County's new Development Review Team (DRT) process. The DRT process brings together zoning applicants, township officials, and relevant government agencies along with County staff in a pre-application meeting to discuss proposed rezoning, variance, conditional use, and plat applications prior to actually submitting such applications.

The DRT process was established by the Crow Wing County Board of Commissioners last year, and is modeled after a similar successful program in Scott County.

"We received a strong response rate from our customer survey, and 100% of the respondents reported the DRT process was helpful or very helpful to them," noted Mark Liedl, County Land Services Director. "Following the lead of our County Board of Commissioners, we are committed to regular surveys of our customers to improve our Planning and Zoning Office and achieve the highest level of service possible."

In addition to 100% of respondents indicating the DRT process was helpful, 73% indicated that the time, date and location of the meeting was convenient, and 93% reported that the presence of township representatives and relevant county and state agency decision-makers was a valuable addition to the pre-application process.

Christopher Pence, Land Services Supervisor in charge of the Planning and Zoning Office, noted that the survey also collected comments from DRT participants that will be used to further refine and improve the service. "We received more than 50 comments from our customers that indicate how the DRT process is meeting their needs, which will help us make more improvements," he said.

One customer comment from the survey characterized the DRT process as "brilliant" and "caring." Other positive feedback from participants included the following comments:

- *To be clear at the start and have all the influencers of the process involved on the front end is to everyone's advantage.*
- *Excellent process. Our Township attends all DRT meetings for residents of our Township.*
- *I wish this process was in place a year and a half ago when we first applied for our variance. It would have helped us immensely in knowing what to ask for.*
- *Great effort...great people to work to work with!*
- *I believe it is great to have the issues discussed first prior to the public format. This allows for dispelling a lot of comments not backed by fact.*
- *Overall, the DRT meetings are very helpful, especially [for] a home/land owner's understanding of what the county requirements are for a variance.*
- *We were impressed with the friendly atmosphere and the knowledgeable people involved. Thank you!*
- *Keep the office staff as helpful and cooperative as with this experience. Remember, we are stressed enough by having to go through the process and don't need to hear a lot of confusing language to resolve our issues. We found this current office staff to be very understanding, professional and easy to work with.*

Among the comments suggesting areas for improvement were:

- *I think the process is great. From a Township perspective, it would be nice to know a little further out for scheduling.*
- *Little more time for notice of meeting.*
- *Ideally, a summary of what the next steps would be for the applicant and relevant dates showing who to meet with [would be helpful].*
- *I think the process needs a little more improvement/streamlining. ... I think issues could be resolved in a more timely manner if one person could act as a liaison between all the different departments.*
- *I think it is very helpful. If there was any way to do it via conference call and email out the forms, that would be more convenient for people who may live or work outside of Brainerd.*

The survey, conducted via email utilizing the free Survey Monkey online service, polled 65 land owner/applicants, government officials, contractors and private consultants who participate in the DRT process in 2009. Thirty three participants responded, a response rate of more than 50%. Of those who responded, 42% were applicants, 21% consultants, 15% Township representatives and 12% were contractors.