

May 3, 2016

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



RALPH M. TERRAZAS
FIRE CHIEF

April 5, 2016

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 16-045

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM:  Ralph M. Terrazas, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: CITYWIDE COORDINATION WITH UNCOLLECTABLE ACCOUNTS PRIOR
TO PERMIT ISSUANCE

FINAL ACTION: ☐ Approved
☐ Denied

☐ Approved w/Corrections
☐ Received & Filed

☐ Withdrawn
☐ Other

SUMMARY

At the September 15, 2015 meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners (Board), the Board considered a Fire Department (LAFD) report (File No. 15-103) on the write-off of uncollectable LAFD charges for services valued at less than \$5,000 from Fiscal Years 2009-10 through 2012-13. During the discussion of the report, the Board requested the Fire department to meet with the Office of the City Administrative Officer and report back on the opportunities for various City department's cashiering systems to communicate with each other to identify and resolve outstanding billings prior to issuing new permits or approving other City services.

The majority of the uncollectable accounts from the September Board report were for uncollected charges for services for Fire Safety Officers, construction plan checks, high-rise inspection fees, inspection restitution, underground tanks and non-compliance inspection fees billed from July 2009 through December 2012.

Currently, each department has its own proprietary cashiering system. The City is working with a vendor to develop a Universal Cashiering System as part of a larger citywide system that will bring accountability to building development and plan check services within the Fire, City Planning, Building and Safety, Transportation and Public Works-Bureau of Engineering departments. The system may be expanded after the initial implementation to include non-development and plan check services, as well as, to other departments.

The City is in the process of implementing the citywide solution to seamlessly deliver development services under the BuildLA system. BuildLA will introduce new web-enabled technology to be used by multiple City departments to receive, assign, review, process, manage, and track all customer requests for services relating to the use and development

of land. The BuildLA system will include an interactive customer web portal, a workflow management platform, electronic plan review, a supporting database, and integration or data sharing with several existing City systems. Universal Cashiering services for in-person or online (E-commerce) transactions is one of its key modules. Specific to the Fire Department, the system will initially process building development and plan check fees. The Department's Fire Inspection Management System (FIMS) will allow on-line payment for inspection requests. If an initial inspection exceeds the two prepaid hours, the FIMS system will flag the account and will not allow the inspector to finalize the permit until fully paid. BuildLA will eventually have the capacity to add additional fire permit, inspection and other Fire Prevention Bureau (FPB) fee modules to be integrated into the system. This single portal will eliminate the current confusion and lack of connectivity between the various City departments that provide public services. Completion of the initial BuildLA system is not expected to be completed until 2018. However, the Universal Cashiering System will go into production in late 2017.

In 2015, the FPB transitioned Development Services plan check and inspection fee collection to prepayments and collects advance deposits for off-hour inspection requests. Additionally, FPB tracks aging billings and follows up on these delinquent accounts prior to being referred to a collection agency.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:

Receive and file this report.

Board report prepared by Mark Davis, Chief Management Analyst, Administrative Services Bureau.