




## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Board of Building Appeals (BOBA) Members

**FROM:** William J. Heniff, AICP, Director of Community Development 

**MEETING DATE:** August 7, 2019

**SUBJECT:** **Virtual Inspections Overview**

In past presentations to the Village Board as well as community groups, staff has sought using the latest technologies to facilitate building permit inspections. The concept is intended to provide for greater turn around in project close-outs for contractors as well as improving efficiencies in the inspection process. To that end, staff is offering BOBA an overview of some of the concepts that have been explored to date as well as the breadth and limitations of such applications.

The concept of virtual inspections is an emerging one and municipalities are seeking to utilize advances in technology to assist the inspection process. In Lombard, examples of such efforts have come in many facets:

### **Re-Inspections and Project Close-Outs**

During the final inspection process, occasionally there will be minor items remaining on punch lists that in the opinion of the inspector need to be addressed prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy but are of a type that the need for a physical inspection may not necessarily be warranted. For example, such items may include Fire/Life Safety Inspection Items such as a missing fire extinguisher or an exit light not properly illuminated. In cases like these, the inspector may provide the contractor with the opportunity to submit proper documentation in the form of photographs and/or set up a Facetime inspection in which the contractor connects directly with the Village to show that a minor, but necessary items has been satisfactorily addressed. This documentation will allow the inspector to ensure that the matter was addressed.

### **Remote Inspections**

Occasionally the Village has had projects that incorporate remote pre-fabrication construction. In the past, the Village has required that the pre-assembled components be “opened-up” do an on-site inspection could be done. In other cases, it was suggested that the staff go to the area of assembly itself. However, neither of these options really are efficient or cost effective for the Village or the contractor. The Village has explored the idea of Facetime reviews in which the inspector could be guiding the contractor/builder through the review process from the Village Hall and be able to document the work that was performed prior to its relocation and final assembly within the Village itself.

### **Simple Inspections**

In another case, utilization of photo documentation can be used to help residential property owners on small inspections. This application may have some benefits for weekend construction project.

As a test case from this summer, a central air conditional replacement was done for a single-family residential property on a weekend. In this case, the Village provided the contractor/homeowner with a list of items that an inspector would want to see prior to approving its installation. These items included providing photos of the location the replacement compressor was located (including a photo showing it meets setback requirements), electrical control panel and compressor model data to ensure consistency and correct size breaker and line penetration caulked, it was able to be approved accordingly.

The advantages in this test-case is that it did not require a return re-inspection by the Village or the contractors performing the work. However, if there were identified issues, the Village would have full documentation of the item to be corrected and could determine whether the matter could be simply be corrected or whether a Village inspector actually needed to go out the residence to see the completed work.

### **Policy Considerations**

Using such technology may also have the added benefit of actually encouraging contractors to secure building permits in the first place if the process is actually simplified for the contractor and resident. Otherwise work could be done without the Village being made aware of it, and we would not know if was even constructed properly. However, it must be emphasized that such approaches are not meant to replace the Village's obligation to ensure that work occurring within the Village is being done per Code. Rather, the concept was to see how technology can help the Village perform its essential government operations.

### **ACTION REQUESTED**

Staff will be discussing these approaches with BOBA at the August 7, 2019 BOBA meeting and will seek input on these approaches. Staff will look for direction from BOBA to allow staff to formally advance virtual inspection methods to aid in the inspection process.