

ANC1C Resolution
DCRA Removal of Online Building Permit Database
June 1 2016

Whereas, DCRA has two online databases to assist parties in tracking the status of construction projects. They include:

- PIVS Online Building Permit Application Tracking (OBPAT) <http://pivs.dcra.dc.gov/OBPAT/Default.aspx>
- Property Information Verification System (PIVS, <http://pivs.dcra.dc.gov/PIVS/Search.aspx>).

Whereas, On February 25, 2016, DCRA removed OBPAT from its website, stating: “the information was too often unreliable and resulted in misinformation to constituents. This is totally unacceptable, DCRA is hopeful that the site will eventually be restored, but the data issues must be resolved before it is. DCRA is committed to transparency, but transparency is helpful when accurate information is available. It is DCRA's goal to have truthful, accurate communication from staff, and the public access sites need to reflect that as well.”

Whereas, PIVS OBPAT was widely regarded as far more useful than PIVS as an information tool in that it provided information on:

- pending as well as approved construction permit applications (permit numbers provided but not complete information on such permits);
- pending, unapproved applications (unlike DCRA's PIVS database, which lists only issued permits);
- the allowable scope of work for approved permits (not provided in PIVS);
- names of the individuals submitting applications and property owners (not provided in PIVS);
- reviewer notes on various disciplines (such as mechanical, electrical, and zoning code compliance), along with the names of DCRA reviewers (not provided in PIVS); and
- the date on each application was submitted (not provided in PIVS).

Whereas, to the extent that PIVS OBPAT contained misinformation, its removal denied DCRA the means to make corrections as many citizens were regular users of the database and thus in a position to inform DCRA of such errors.

Whereas, removal of PIVS OBPAT deprived citizens of information necessary in assessing the legality of permits and/or work being performed, particularly in terms of submitting appeals for alleged building code and zoning regulation violations, both of which have time limits within which individuals must file appeals.

Whereas, DC Official Code § 2-536(a)(8A) and (b) require DCRA to make the complete permit file for each application available online, for free, without the need for any citizen request. Additionally, the Director of the District's Office of Open Government stated in a 1/29/16 opinion letter that DCRA is “woefully out of compliance” with this statutory obligation.¹

Whereas, whatever problems with OBPAT may have existed cannot justify disabling public access to the overwhelmingly accurate and up-to-date records that are now completely unavailable online.

Therefore, ANC 1C calls upon DCRA to restore public access to PIVS OBPAT immediately.

Furthermore, ANC1C authorizes any ANC1C Commissioner to represent ANC1C on this matter.

And Finally Resolved, that the Chair of ANC 1C shall be authorized to communicate this resolution to the Mayor, the Director of DCRA, members of the District Council and the Zoning Commission.

¹ OOG Opinion Letter of Jan. 29, 2016, <http://www.open-dc.gov/documents/oog-00212916-eckenwiler-advisory-opinion>.