

# Section Two

## Office Procedures

### Scope

This section provides details regarding the services provided in the Knox County Code Administration and related offices.

### Preliminary

The office staff of Engineering, Code Enforcement, Building Inspections, and the Fire Bureau will be glad to consult with you about your project on a preliminary basis in the development, planning, and design stages. This can help to ensure you are proceeding in a way that will satisfy permitting requirements and help you to avoid costly delays. Much of this can be accomplished over the phone or through letters and faxes but sometimes it is better to make an appointment and meet in person.

Preliminary consultations with other departments and agencies are recommended when their review is required for a permit. This may include applications to a variety of places such as the Metropolitan Planning Commission for certified address assignment, rezoning, subdivision, use-on-review approval or Technology Corridor uses, applications to the Health Department for septic systems, public pools or food service, applications to the State of Tennessee for schools, daycares or billboards, and applications to the Tennessee Valley Authority and/or The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for boat docks, bridges or marinas.

### Applications

All permit applications are accepted in the Code Administration office with the exception of applications for grading only which are accepted at the Department of Engineering and Public Works located at 205 West Baxter Avenue. Any permit may be applied for anytime between the hours of 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM with the exception of grading only permits and sign permits. Appointments for grading only permit applications may be made by calling Engineering and Public Works, (865) 215-5800, and appointments for sign permit applications may be made by calling Knox County Code Administration, (865) 215-2325. The deadline for applications for the Board of Zoning Appeals is the Wednesday (2 weeks prior to the BZA meeting date) of every month at noon (12:00 PM). No exceptions will be made if the application is made after 12:00 PM. Holidays may vary deadlines and meeting dates. The deadline for applications for the Construction Board of Adjustments and Appeals is 12:00 PM on the next to last Wednesday of each month. For application requirements and deadlines of other departments and agencies refer to Appendix C for a directory of names and phone numbers.

The permit technicians at the Code Administration office will take your project information for the permit application. They will check the zoning to verify that the use is permitted and check to be sure all required information and drawings are submitted for review. If the applicant does not have all of the information needed the application may not be accepted. Please refer to

Appendix E of this manual for the permit application and submittal requirements for your project. When plans are required for review, a non-refundable plan review fee must be paid at the time of application. Please refer to Appendix A of this manual for the fee schedule. When completed, the permit application and drawings are sent through the complete plan review process described in the following sections.

## **Residential Plan Review**

Upon the initial review of one and two family dwellings by the permit technician a no fee grading permit will be issued if all application requirements are met. This allows the builder to dig the foundation and have it inspected while residential plan examiner is reviewing for building code compliance. This normally takes two to three days for a complete set of plans. For mobile homes and residential accessory structures less than 120 square feet in area no building construction plans are required and the permit technician will issue the complete permit based on the site plan if all requirements are met.

The review of plans for houses, duplexes, townhouses and residential accessory structures over 120 square feet in area includes a thorough check of the zoning regulations for setbacks, number of dwellings, lot size, lot coverage, building height, driveways, parking and any special requirements when the project is permitted as a use-on-review. These plans are further checked for compliance with the minimum standards of the applicable building, plumbing, mechanical, gas and fire prevention codes. Minor code deficiencies are marked in red on the plans but revised drawings will be needed to correct major code deficiencies. Some of the details checked are the foundation, slab and block details, joist and rafter spans, crawl space and attic space access and ventilation, floor, wall and roof decking, sheathing and covering, stairs and rails, fireplace, hearth and chimney, tenant separation and smoke detectors, and the gas, mechanical and plumbing systems.

The review of plans for townhouses with three or more attached units will also be subject to review of the site plan by the fire code plans examiner to determine compliance with fire hydrant and fire equipment access standards.

The residential plan examiner will review condominiums with less than three attached units only. Condominiums with three or more attached units and apartments will be reviewed by engineering, codes enforcement, building and fire plan examiners the same as for commercial buildings.

## **Commercial Plan Review**

When your application for a new commercial building is complete, it is then reviewed by the engineering plan examiner for compliance regarding the site hydrology. This will include checking the grading plan for the control of erosion, surface runoff, and the site plans for the proper design of drainage features such as detention basins or storm sewers and other site improvements such as paving.

The codes enforcement plan examiner reviews the plans to verify that the use is permitted, minimum setbacks, and other zoning requirements.

The fire code plan examiner reviews minimum standards of the codes concerning fire issues including the applicable portions of the Building Code, the Fire Prevention Code, and the Life Safety Code. They check the site plan for distance to fire hydrants, the width, and location of fire lanes and the distance between buildings. The allowable height and area for the building based on the occupancy and type of construction is checked at this time as well as the means of egress and any fire separation requirements. Other fire protection items that are checked will include any firestopping, sprinkler systems, standpipes, and alarms.

The building plan examiner checks the project for compliance with the minimum requirements of the building, mechanical, gas, plumbing and accessibility codes, as well as some aspects of zoning such as parking requirements. The building plans are checked for the basic requirements for allowable height and area for the occupancy and type of construction, minimum plumbing facilities, and accessibility. Proper structural design to accommodate all loads including dead, live, wind, snow, concentrated, impact, and seismic loads will also be checked as well as the designs of the mechanical, gas and plumbing systems.

### **Other Reviews**

Other departments and agencies will review plans for certain projects. The Knox County Health Department reviews plans for any septic system, commercial kitchen, or commercial pool. The Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) reviews plans for all new developments located in a PR planned residential, PC planned commercial, SC shopping center, T transition or BP business and technology park zone as well as any use-on-review.

The Tennessee Technology Corridor Development Authority (TTCDA) reviews plans for developments in the TO technology overlay zone. The MPC and TTCDA reviews are mainly for site requirements including landscaping, signage, traffic patterns, and other factors related to the suitability of the proposed development and only review the building for height, area, and location requirements. A stamped approved development plan from MPC or a Certificate of Appropriateness from the TTCDA is required to be submitted for a building permit.

The Knox County Law Department and the Knox County Finance Department are required to review the bonds providing for the removal of cellular telecommunications towers and the permit applicant must bring their written approval of the bond to submit with the application. Although their review is not necessary for a building permit, the Knox County Air Quality Management Department and the Knox County Beer Board may also need to review your project.

Tennessee's State Fire Marshal is required to review all plans for State owned facilities; educational occupancies and daycare centers before Knox County can issue permits for them. The review of other state agencies may be needed such as the Department of Human Services for daycare centers, the Department of Transportation for driveway connections or the Highway Beautification Section for billboards.

Projects such as boat docks or marinas may be required to be reviewed by the Tennessee Valley Authority and the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

Please refer to Appendix C for a directory of phone numbers to these departments so that you may call and find out their submittal requirements and other pertinent information.

## **Revisions**

All revisions to a project must be submitted to the permit technician and go through the appropriate plan reviews including other departments and agencies when required. There is no fee for the first two revisions but subsequent revisions will require a \$100.00 submittal fee. When plans for fire alarm systems, fire sprinkler systems, kitchen hoods, or tanks are submitted for a previously permitted project a separate permit will be required. A plan review and permit fee based on the estimated value of the additional work will be charged. After the plan examiners have checked revisions they will be returned to the permit technician and issued to the builder. These plans must be kept on the job site along with the original set of plans reviewed.

## **Issuing Permits**

When all plan reviews are complete and all required information is received, the applicant will be notified and the permit may be issued. Permits may only be issued to the property owner, their contractor, or a duly authorized representative. After the applicant signs the permit and pays the fees they will be given the contractor's stamped reviewed set of plans, a list of required inspections, an orange permit card to display at the job site and a receipt for the fees paid. All fees shall be payable to Knox County Codes.

An application for a permit for any proposed work shall be deemed to have been abandoned six months after the date of filing for the permit, unless before then a permit has been issued. Every permit issued shall become invalid unless the work authorized by such permit is commenced within six months after its issuance, or if the work authorized by such permit is suspended or abandoned for a period of six months after the time the work is commenced.

Permits are not transferable. If the contractor on a project is to be changed, the original permit will be void and a new permit must be applied for.

## **Scheduling Inspections**

When each phase of the work is ready, the contractor must call the Codes Administration office at 215-2325 to set up an appointment for the work to be inspected. Inspections may be scheduled for a certain time in the mornings at 8:00, 9:00, 10:00, and 11:00 or between 12:00 and 3:00 in the afternoon. The inspector completes afternoon scheduling between the hours of 12:00 and 3:00 geographically in order to perform more inspections in a shorter period of time. Every effort will be made to schedule inspections when they are needed but inspection times are limited and appointments are made on a first come first serve basis so the sooner an appointment can be scheduled the better. There will be no fee for inspections cancelled prior to the appointment time. A \$30 re-inspection fee will be charged to the contractor listed on the permit for each re-inspection of rejected items or for extra scheduled inspections.

Inspections by State of Tennessee licensed Architects or Engineers are an acceptable alternate to having Knox County Codes perform an inspection. If this is done, the registered professional shall file a written inspection report to this office referencing the permit number and the specific findings from the inspection.

## **Issuing Certificates**

Upon satisfactory completion of construction authorized by a permit and after all inspections have been passed a Certificate of Occupancy or a Certificate of Completion will be issued to the contractor listed on the permit. This is the only copy and it is usually mailed within 7 to 10 days after the final inspections are passed.

A new building shall not be occupied or a change made in the occupancy, nature or use of a building or part of a building until a Certificate of Occupancy or Certificate of Completion has been issued.

## **Complaints**

Complaints concerning possible violations of the codes and ordinances of Knox County are accepted by phone, fax, and mail or in person. The person receiving the complaint will fill out a complaint report form and give it to the appropriate person. Complaints concerning building code violations will be given to a building inspector to check and complaints concerning zoning regulations will be given to a code enforcement officer to check. These reports are kept on file in the codes office with the inspector's field report to verify if there is a violation and what action was taken.

If the complaint is not in regards to regulations contained in the building codes or zoning related ordinances the complainant will be referred to the appropriate authority having jurisdiction.

## **Zoning Letters**

The Code Enforcement Department will issue zoning verification letters for properties when requested in writing. Requests must include all information necessary to identify the property, the proposed use of the property, the current use of the property and if vacant for how long. Requests can be mailed or faxed and confirmation is normally completed within three working days. A fee of \$20 will be charged for a zoning letter.

## **Home Occupation Approval**

The Code Enforcement Department considers requests for home occupations, which must be made in writing, and issues letters for approval or denial. Requests must include all information necessary to identify the property, a detailed description of what type of business is proposed on the property, who will be involved in the business, the location of the business in the home, information on incoming and outgoing deliveries and all other type of activity that will take place. Current regulations allow only family members residing on the premises to be engaged in the business and do not allow the business to be in an accessory building. Further regulations are contained in the Zoning Ordinance and each request for a home occupation is carefully reviewed to confirm compliance with regulations. Requests can be mailed or faxed and approval or denial is normally issued within three working days. A fee may be required for this service.

## **Records**

All information pertaining to the administration and enforcement of the codes and ordinances of Knox County is kept on file in the office of Knox County Codes Administration. Plans are retained for a period of two years and then sent to the Knox County Records Management facility at 1000 North Central Avenue. These records are available to anyone who requests them. Plans may be viewed in the office but are not to be taken out of the office except when required by the courts.

Weekly Permit Activity Reports of all permit activity are available on Monday morning at no charge. With advance notice, special requested reports will be provided at a cost of \$1.00 per page.