



City of Racine, Wisconsin
AGENDA BRIEFING MEMORADUM

AGENDA DATE:

May 28, 2024 – Finance and Personnel Committee

June 4, 2024 – Common Council

SUBJECT: Communication sponsored by Mayor Mason, on behalf of the Director of City Development, requesting permission to enter into a professional services agreement with EPLEX, LLC, d/b/a E-Plan Exam, for Commercial Building, HVAC, Fire Alarm, Fire Sprinkler, and Plumbing Plan Reviews

PREPARED BY: Jeff Hintz, CNU-A – Assistant Director, Department of City Development and Dan Kirchenberg, Chief Building Official

SUMMARY: Currently, the City of Racine is delegated to complete commercial plan review for new commercial buildings up to 50,000 cubic feet and altering of existing commercial buildings up to 100,000 cubic feet. Any plan review exceeding the aforementioned sizes, must go to the State of Wisconsin for a plan review, before the Building Division can issue a building permit.

With this proposal, the contractor/developer would have the option to use the State or E-Plan to complete their plan review, regardless of the building size. Either way will result in State approved plans that would be eligible for a building permit to begin their project.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS: Utilizing E-Plan would allow for the City of Racine to be delegated for all commercial plan review above the current building size limitations and will also bring in additional revenue as noted below along with other benefits to the City of Racine. See below for additional benefits:

Fully Delegate the City for Any Sized Review

This means we can intake any sized building plans. Currently we are limited to in-house reviews of 50,000 cubic feet or less. That building size is approximately that of a Starbucks Coffee Shop. All larger plan reviews are required to go to the State currently.

City Gets Share of Revenue

When plans are reviewed by the State, the city sees zero plan review fees. With E-Plan, the city would receive 10% of plan review fees. As a company, E-Plan donates portions of their fees towards college scholarships in the communities they serve.

Speed of Review

State plan review can take up to 2-3 months depending on season and project volume. E-Plan promises a maximum 15 day review time, with the option for a builder to pay an expediated review fee to get it done within one week.

Transparency

From the moment of intake to final finished review, City staff and the submitter (developer/contractor) can see every step of the review process in an online portal and are

more involved. When plans are sent to the State for review, City staff or the developer/contractor generally have no idea when review the plans will be finished.

Code Consultation

If Building Division inspectors ever have questions on codes or plans, E-Plan staff are available as an immediate resource, as opposed to calling the State and waiting to hear back on an answer.

E-Plan employs Code officials to review building plans who are retired and/or former Municipal or State plan reviewers to complete this professional service. It is important to note the E-Plan process to have plans reviewed would be the option of the contractor/developer; the State would still review and approve plans under this scenario, but with E-Plan, the contractor/developer would have the option to use the State or E-Plan depending upon their timeframe or desired speed for the review, or some other rationale. Either way will result in a contractor/developer having State approved plans that would then be eligible for a building permit to begin their project.

The accompanying ordinance amendment is required with this proposal, as the current regulation only contemplates the State of Wisconsin completing a building plan review. Currently, E-Plan is a [designated plan reviewer for municipalities](#) across the State of Wisconsin as an alternative to the State review.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized and directed to execute professional services agreement with EPLEX, LLC, d/b/a E-Plan Exam as presented.

FISCAL NOTE: The proposed ordinance has no costs associated with adoption. The professional services agreement would result in potential payments to the City of approximately \$15,000 to \$30,000 annually, depending on construction activity, which would be added to the City's general fund.