



### City of Largo Agenda Item 3

Meeting Date  
11/13/18

Presenter: Tracey Schofield, Code Enforcement Manager

Department: CD – Community Development

**TITLE:**

CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION UPDATE

The City of Largo Code Enforcement Division was formally created in the FY 2018 budget and has been working hard for the past year to become more efficient in an effort to better serve and keep safe the citizens of Largo. The Code Enforcement Division consists of:

One (1) new Code Enforcement Manager (hired in April 2018), one (1) Chief Code Enforcement Officer, four (4) Code Enforcement Officers, one (1) Code Compliance Officer (Handles all tree and landscaping related code and site development issues) and two (2) Board Support Specialists (Code Enforcement Board and Special Magistrate).

Last year the Code Enforcement Division:

- \* Opened 2,357 new cases.
- \* Took 194 of those cases before the Code Enforcement Board (98) or Special Magistrate (96).
- \* Achieved a 92% voluntary compliance rate for the year for the Division.

In the first quarter of FY 2018 the Code Enforcement Division assisted in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma with damage assessment which generated hundreds of structure, tree, and damaged sign investigations. Besides normal duties the Division also conducted a number of special project cases that addressed bus stop advertisement and donation bin registrations. The Division partnered with other City departments and citizens for a Southwest neighborhood cleanup. Lastly, the Code Enforcement Division participated in a Community Care event when we assisted a disabled resident who had code violations by planting trees, pulling weeds, and mowing her grass.

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Budgeted Amount: \$0.00      Budget Page No(s): NA      Available Amount: \$0.00      Expenditure Amount: \$0.00

Additional Budgetary Information: Not applicable

Funding Source(s): N/A      Sufficient Funds Available:  Yes  No      Budget Amendment Required:  Yes  No      Source: N/A

City Attorney Reviewed:  Yes  No  N/A      Advisory Board Recommendation:  For  Against  N/A      Consistent With:  Yes  No  N/A      Strategic Plan

Potential Motion/Direction Requested: DOES THE CITY COMMISSION FEEL THAT THE NAME CHANGE FOR THE CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION TO THE "COMMUNITY STANDARDS DIVISION" REFLECTS THE CITY COMMISSION'S VISION FOR THE ROLE OF THE DIVISION?

Staff Contact: Carol Stricklin, AICP, Com Dev Director      587-7490      cstrickl@largo.com

Attachments: None

In the second half of the year, the Division placed an emphasis on training, both internally and externally with a focus on cross-training the officers in the areas of building inspections, permitting, and arborist related issues. The goal of the training is to better educate the team on all the other aspects of the City functions that relate directly or indirectly to the Code Enforcement mission. The Division is developing a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) manual and a new hire training checklist to have consistency in work product.

In 2019, the Division is focusing on;

- 1) Changing work processes in an effort to respond sooner to citizen complaints.
- 2) Implementing the new agenda software and the lien assessment program to improve these processes.
- 3) Identifying and responding proactively to any derelict properties using all resources available.

As we move forward it is important to take stock of what has been accomplished in the past, the services provided, how we provide services, and what can be done better. The job of a Code Enforcement Officer can be a difficult one but there are things that can be done to mitigate this. A new training philosophy will help build confidence in the officers that what they are saying and doing is correct, however, that is only one piece of the puzzle. How the officers approach their assignments is just as important. An emphasis will be placed on citizen contact, not only with the citizen who makes the complaint but also with the citizen who has the issue that needs to be corrected. Having a face to face, shake your hand type of contact not only helps obtain voluntary compliance more often, it also builds relationships with citizens that over time may reduce future violations.

To help with this new approach the Code Enforcement Division will be implementing several new branding objectives to help reach our citizens. This includes a social media presence, participation in more City events, new code related handout materials, door hangers and a change in uniform color and equipment.

Lastly, in an effort to not only change the external perception of Code Enforcement but also an internal one, we are recommending to the City Commission a name change. The name "Code Enforcement" denotes a more aggressive approach to mostly minor violations. In following with a more open approach to code violations we are recommending that our name be changed to the "Community Standards Division". The name "Community" has many meanings but what it always means is that a group, in this case the citizens, businesses and the City have come together as one. It is reflective of both the department name, (Community Development) and the City's brand as "Your Community of Choice". The word "Standard" reflects shared values the community has towards its safety and appearance. Together they form a name that helps present what the Division is striving to accomplish without the aggressiveness of the past.