

Permits – Understanding Departments

Zoning Department:

Typically, zoning departments don't care how the building is built, they care where it's going on the property, what size the structure is and how high it is. Keep in mind: If a garage is attached to the home, it can affect height restrictions and the requirements.

Building Department:

Building departments usually don't care where the building is built, they care how it's being built. My experience: The building department is the easiest to handle.

Homeowners Association: (HOA)

This will affect customers who are building inside an HOA. There is no box we can put an HOA in because it can vary widely, but generally they have rules that are similar to a zoning and building department combined with an added element of how the structure will look compared to their house. Typically, they have rules that the structure must look similar to their home, meaning the color, the look, and sometimes it must match the pitch of the roof. Note: If a customer lives in an HOA, they need to start there before reaching out to Zoning & Building depts.

Review Boards:

This is the case in Cleveland and surrounding suburbs, and I've only seen it in some cities. A review board is like an HOA in that they look at the overall project to see how it compares to the home. My experience: If you are not in the Cleveland area, I would not bring any of this up to a customer. Generally, it's not good to go too deep in the permitting talk early on.

Health Department:

In some cities the health department gets involved before the zoning & building departments do. They are concerned that the structure is not too close to a well, septic, water lines, etc. My experience: If you are in the Columbus area this is usually the case (depending) on size of structure.

Historical District:

A Historical District is very similar to a review board in that they care how the building fits into the "Historical District" (That means siding, roof pitch, colors and sometimes even material used) My experience: I would have the customer check with the them before you go too far into the design process.

Permits – Understanding Departments Cont.

Order of applying for permits:

- Zoning—Building
- HOA—Zoning—Building
- Health Department—Zoning—Building (Columbus Area)
- Zoning—Review Board—Building (Cleveland Area)
- Zoning—Historical—Building (Only in Historical Districts)

Note: In all my cases they usually must get a zoning permit before the building permit.

Questions to ask:

Zoning Department: (Let them know what kind of structure you want to build first)

- What are my height restrictions?
- What are my requirements? How far to be from the road, house, property lines, etc.
- Are there any requirements for color or how the building looks compared to the house?
- If I need a variance, what does that process look like?

Building Department: (Let them know what kind of structure you want to build first)

- Do I need a footer foundation, or can I build it on a concrete slab?
- Do we need stamped drawings or would standard contractor/builder drawings work?
- Do I need engineered truss drawings?
- If I need a variance, what does that process look like?