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Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement

The Hub

A publication of the Information Technology Division

December 2020

December is CARES Act Month!



CARES Act
COVID-19 Relief Fund

Due to the pandemic, the federal government approved funding to assist organizations to continue to operate in unprecedented times.

Below are projects we were able to get approved:

- **Virtual Permit Center**

Issue: Before the pandemic, applicants would come to the building to get permits in a day (or so) for those permits that fit the criteria for a “walk-thru.” When the building closed to the public, the walk-thru applications were being dropped off in the drop boxes, etc.

Solution: This app allows applicants that previously came to the permit center for a “walk-thru” to be able to do so remotely. This is a game changer during this pandemic allowing our applicants the same service remotely!

- **Remote Proctoring**

Issue: Before the pandemic, applicants for journeyman and master electrician came on site to sit for the 3- and 4-hour proctored exams. DPIE staff would then manually score each exam and get back to applicants.

Solution: We are finalizing procurement to be able to allow journeyman and master electrician exams to be remotely proctored, scored and results electronically delivered, saving DPIE staff to socially distance and gain time to work on other tasks.

- **Inspection Scheduling IVR replacement**

Issue: Each morning, the Inspections Division prints out the inspections, shuffles paper and provide inspectors field work for the day. When resources shift for the day, rescheduling is a tedious, manual process.

Solution: We are now working to replace the existing solution to allow for a more robust inspection scheduling process. Inspections will have a management portal that replaces the paper shuffling, handles resource changes seamlessly and proactively reschedules inspectors with the click of a button.

- **Scanning, Indexing and Making Electronically Available**

Issue: Currently, DPIE staff come on-site to search, copy, scan and fulfill MPIO requests, as well as internal requests, for on-site and warehouse records, i.e., U&Os, permits, plans, etc. External requests are sent by FedEx to customers.

Solution: The new system will allow DPIE staff to electronically access the records on-site, eliminating the need to come on-site to fulfill record requests.

Phase II will allow the public to go online to access records. The larger effort will be sorting out DPIE records in the County's storage facility and re-evaluating retention periods of DPIE records to allow more records to be electronically accessed.

- **Mobile Devices**

Issue: Inspectors were using 3–4 year old Surface Pros and utilizing the iPhone hot spot for Wi-Fi access.

Solution: We have replaced inspectors' Surface Pros with Dell rugged extreme devices. Inspectors can now connect in the field wirelessly with their rugged devices and allow a more efficient use of mobile devices in the field.

- **Vehicle Mounts**

Issue: Prior to the pandemic, inspectors in the field used mobile devices to review their work and returned to the office to input the data due to not having a "mobile office" to comfortably complete the work.

Solution: We have procured vehicle mounts for the newer vehicles in the Inspections Division fleet to be delivered and mounted in December to assist inspectors in the field allowing for a more "mobile friendly office" environment.

- **Limited Contact Appointments**

Issue: Before Covid 19 our customers had the ability to come on site and meet with staff for various reasons/appointments. The county discussed partial reopening and possibly allowing case-by-case appointments. Director Bolling wanted the ability to safely manage the process while keeping everyone safe.

Solution: We implemented limited contact appointments that allow our customers to contact DPIE, schedule appointments and receive an email or text of appointment. Upon date and time of customer arrival, customer would text when they have arrived in the parking lot and DPIE staff would direct customer to appointment. This cuts down on customers coming into the lobby to wait and/or interact with others asking questions, etc. This allows us to keep the level of person to person contact low and limit public access to the building to verified appointments only.

- **E-Signatures**

Issue: When the pandemic hit, DPIE had several internal processes that required manual signatures be routed throughout the agency and across the county.

Solution: We replaced manual signatures with e-signatures to keep agency and county processes running smoothly while keeping safe and avoiding contact with colleagues.

- **Virtual Meetings**

Issue: When the pandemic hit, DPIE had several standing internal meetings, as well as in person meetings with our customers and public groups.

Solution: We replaced in person meetings with virtual meetings to continue to serve our customers and effectively communicate throughout the agency.

Momentum (New System Replacing ePermits) Update!



- **Licensing module**, launched October 13, 2020! — We are now working through operational initial stages with our customers, getting them familiar with the new process of registration.

- **Enforcement & Health** — We are now working with both the enforcement division and the Health department understanding their business processes to be configured in the new system.

- **Remember** — It's important to be *present* in requirement gathering meetings. Think of the gaps in our current systems — primarily due to poor requirements and low user testing during system build.

Therefore, everyone involved in the processes must attend requirement gathering meetings and speak up. The less you speak, the more likely you will have what you had, and your day-to-day work will be unnecessarily arduous/tedious — so be present, speak up! Lastly, and more importantly, it's more costly to revise the system after it's built. This includes reports, reports, reports!

Welcome Takisha Hill to DPIE IT!



Takisha Hill

Welcome Takisha!

Takisha Hill (Kisha) is a native Prince Georgian and has worked with the County in the past. Kisha will be assisting us with tier 1 tickets as she gets familiar with our agency.

We are excited to have Kisha on the team!



Online Security Tips

Over the next month or so, OIT will send individual invites to those who have not yet completed security awareness training. When you receive the email, it is safe to click on it!

Remember, links to be cautious of will most likely be external links. They will have a yellow "CAUTION" banner, like the one shown below, to help identify potential threats from outside sources.

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email domain which carries the additional risk that it may be a phishing email and/or contain malware.

The above caution message is seen on emails from external sources, as they are more likely to contain viruses and other types of malware.

We want to thank you for being cautious of clicking on links! We notice your efforts and appreciate your diligence!

Lunch-N-Learn

Once per month, we will host a Lunch-N-Learn series. It will be held the 3rd Friday of each month from 12:00 p.m. – 12:45 p.m. Feel free to eat your lunch as we go over pre-selected topics that will assist you in becoming more tech savvy in your day-to-day work.

You can send in a ticket with a suggestion of something you want to know more about; just remember to title the ticket, "Lunch-N-Learn Topic Suggestion." We will evaluate the topic and be prepared to teach and discuss at the next session. The agenda of the month will be sent prior to the Lunch-N-Learn so that you have the option of attending. We will post a video to the Lunch-N-Learn in the Telework folder on the shared drive in the event you have the need to review later or were unable to attend.



Testimony:

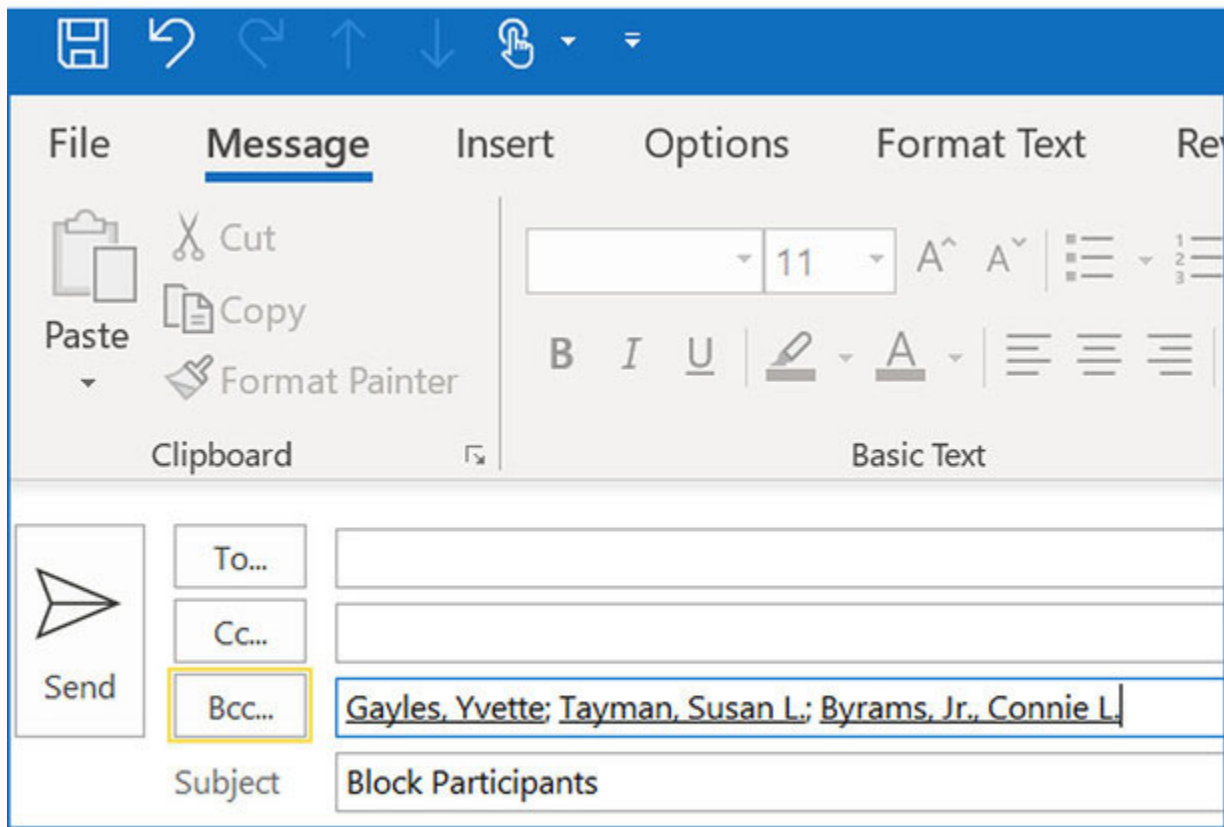
"I've become a bit more tech savvy lately due to the Lunch-N-Learn I attended, and it has assisted me with internal and external customers" – Bosa Ugo



Tech Tips of the Month

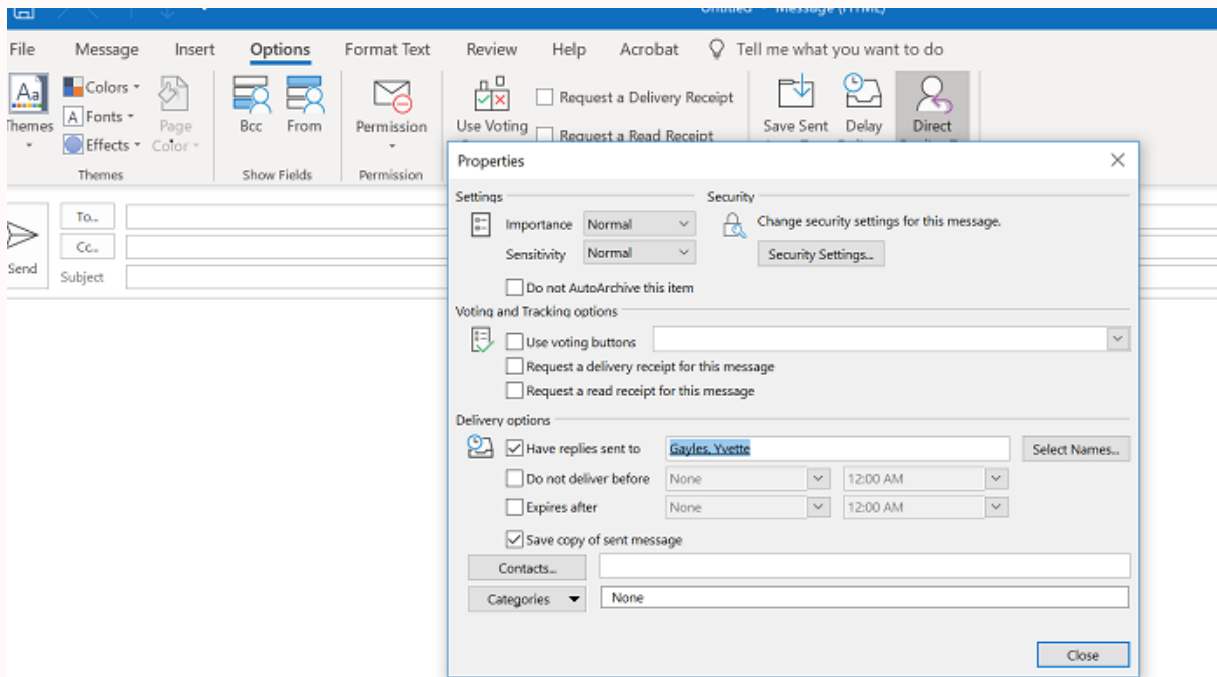
Have you ever had to send an email to a group of people, but you didn't want everyone to know the names of the other participants? Have you ever had to send an email to a group of people but wanted to ensure if someone hits "REPLY ALL," the email will only go to the sender, not to any of the other participants? The answer to both scenarios is to send **Bcc only**. **Bcc** stands for **B**lind **c**arbon **c**opy, and it shows up when you click cc (carbon copy). The difference between carbon copy (cc) and blind carbon copy (bcc) is cc recipients are visible to all the other recipients in an email while Bcc recipients are not visible to anyone.

See Example Below:



Sample image of a Bcc addressed email.

If you do not choose the bcc option and would like to control replies, you can also (1) go to your outlook email (2) choose **options** (3) at the top right click "**Direct Replies to**" this will allow you to choose whom to allow replies to be sent to.



Prince George's County

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