



MEMORANDUM

To: *John O. Williams, Deputy County Supervisor*

From: *Ryan Gatlin, BCWS Engineering Manager*

Through: *Richard Marchand, BCWS Director*

Copy To: *Frank Carson, Alison Simmons, Hank Jackson, Building Permit Applicants, File*

Re: *Procedure for Requesting Sewer and/or Water Availability Letters for Building Permits*

Date: *June 28, 2023*

BCWS Engineering is revising the requirements to be met before issuing Availability Letters used to obtain building permits **prior** to issuance of the SCDHEC Permit(s) to Operate (PTO) on sewer and water mains. BCWS established the previous requirements for the following reasons.

Administratively

Our office receives a high volume of requests for Availability Letters from developers to obtain building permits. As plan/project review is our number one priority, we discussed ways to address these requests while still maintaining our priority.

Additionally, there have been issues in the past where homes were sold before issuance of the PTO for the utility portion of the projects. The new homeowners were unable to move into their houses on the scheduled closing date because sewer and/or water services were not available. This resulted in developers, homebuilders, and new homeowners requesting expedited plan review for their projects.

In the Field

Vertical construction should not commence without access to dedicated and reliable fire protection. Fire protection is typically unavailable until the completion of the water main construction and inspection.

Houses built prior to PTO may result in illegal connections to our sewer and/or water systems and in illegal use of water by house construction crews from hydrants and stub-outs.

Housing construction often interrupts and/or makes final inspections and testing of sewer and/or water mains impossible, which results in further delay of PTO issuance.

The revisions to the previous requirements stem from continued issues where homeowners are trying to close on a home without sewer and/or water service available. This leads to issues where Berkeley County citizens are having to store their possessions and live in hotels and short-term rentals while the project is closing out and obtaining PTO. Additionally, if the water main does not have PTO, there is no guaranteed fire protection available for the homes/businesses that are being constructed.

Requirements

For the reasons above, BCWS is revising the previous requirements as shown below. These revised requirements must be met prior to issuance of availability letters for building permits.

Residential Construction

BCWS Engineering will issue the availability letter for the associated sewer and/or water main construction if the following requirements are met.

- BCWS must have conducted a final inspection on the sewer and/or water mains with no major deficiencies found.
- All sewer and water main tests must have been conducted and passed, with the exception of bac-t testing.
- BCWS must have received the initial close-out submittal for review.
- PTO must be anticipated within 90 days. If the project has not received PTO within 90 days of issuing the availability letter for building permits, BCWS Engineering reserves the right to request building permits be placed on hold until PTO is received.

Commercial Construction / Apartments

BCWS Engineering will issue the availability letter for the associated sewer and/or water main construction if the following requirements are met.

- SCDHEC Permit(s) to Construct have been issued for the sewer and/or water main.
- Construction of the sewer and/or water mains has begun in the field.
- For projects consisting of a combination of a main extension and service only connection, BCWS Engineering will coordinate with BCWS Operations for concurrence on the request. BCWS Engineering will issue the availability letter after both departments have concurred with the request and the previous requirements have been met.

Requesting the Availability Letter for Building Permits

Submit an email to BCWS Engineering at bcws.eng@berkeleycountysc.gov once the project meets all requirements and provide the following information:

- Project Name associated with the sewer and/or water main construction (not to be confused with the subdivision name in the field)
- TMS Numbers and Addresses for **each lot** in MS Word format

BCWS Engineering and/or Operations will review the request and the availability letter will be issued in a timely manner based on current workload.

****PLEASE NOTE: BCWS shall not be liable for any delay in obtaining a certificate of occupancy should a closing date be scheduled prior to final inspections from BCWS Operations for sewer and/or water services.****