

**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA ITEM TRANSMITTAL**

(1) DEPARTMENT Public Works	(2) MEETING DATE 7/22/2014	(3) CONTACT/PHONE Will Clemens, Department Administrator (805) 781-5299	
(4) SUBJECT Status Report on the American Public Works Association (APWA) Accreditation Process. All Districts.			
(5) RECOMMENDED ACTION It is recommended that the Board receive a status report on the APWA Accreditation Process for the Department of Public Works.			
(6) FUNDING SOURCE(S) N/A	(7) CURRENT YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT N/A	(8) ANNUAL FINANCIAL IMPACT N/A	(9) BUDGETED? N/A
(10) AGENDA PLACEMENT { } Consent    { } Presentation    { } Hearing (Time Est. ___) <b>{X}</b> Board Business (Time Est. <u>30 min.</u> )			
(11) EXECUTED DOCUMENTS { } Resolutions    { } Contracts    { } Ordinances <b>{X}</b> N/A			
(12) OUTLINE AGREEMENT REQUISITION NUMBER (OAR) N/A		(13) BUDGET ADJUSTMENT REQUIRED? BAR ID Number: N/A { } 4/5 Vote Required <b>{X}</b> N/A	
(14) LOCATION MAP N/A	(15) BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT? No	(16) AGENDA ITEM HISTORY <b>{X}</b> N/A    Date: _____	
(17) ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE REVIEW <i>Nikki J. Schmidt</i>			
(18) SUPERVISOR DISTRICT(S) All Districts			

Reference: 14JUL22-BB-1

# County of San Luis Obispo



TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Public Works

Will Clemens, Department Administrator

Dave Flynn, Deputy Director of Public Works

DATE: 7/22/2014

SUBJECT: Status Report on the American Public Works Association (APWA) Accreditation Process. All Districts.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Board receive a status report on the APWA Accreditation Process for the Department of Public Works.

## **DISCUSSION**

The American Public Works Association's (APWA) mission is to develop and support the people, agencies, and organizations that plan, build, maintain, and improve our communities. The organization provides comprehensive resources in the areas of professional development, advocacy, networking, and outreach. In order to enhance the level of professionalism and advance the work of Public Works agencies, APWA has developed an accreditation program. The purpose of the accreditation program is to provide a means of formally verifying and recognizing public works agencies for compliance with the recommended practices set forth in the APWA *Public Works Management Practices Manual*. The program is a voluntary, self-motivated approach to objectively evaluate, verify, and recognize compliance with nationally established best management practices. The objectives of the accreditation program are to:

- Create impetus for organization self-improvement and stimulate the general raising of standards of practice
- Offer a voluntary evaluation and education program rather than government regulated activity
- Recognize good performance and provide motivation to maintain and improve performance
- Improve public works performance and the delivery of services
- Increase professionalism
- Instill pride among agency staff, elected officials and the local community

The Department of Public Works has engaged in the accreditation program as an active strategic planning tool to better define our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC). The purpose is to improve the quality and breadth of services we provide to the community. The accreditation program provides a means to benchmark our performance against nationwide standards developed by the APWA.

The first step of the process toward accreditation was to perform a self-assessment using the *Public Works Management Practices Manual*. Each current agency practice is formally documented and compared against the recommended practices contained in the *Public Works Management Practices Manual*. As a result, problem areas are identified so that the agency can take corrective action. The Department of Public Works is responsible for 33 functional areas with over 500 individual practices described in the *Public Works Management Practices Manual*.

During the self-assessment process we found that the Department complied with approximately 70% of the practices. Another 20% of the practices existed, but needed updating as many had not been addressed since the 1980's and 90's. Policies and/or procedures for the remaining 10% needed to be developed from scratch. In addition, this effort has resulted in our policies and procedures (practices) being brought together in centralized locations resulting in immediate efficiencies.

A summary of finding of our SWOC reveals:

### **Strengths**

- Readily have knowledgeable staff on board to address issues/practices
- Significant number of practices already in place
- Environmental practices exceed national benchmark for Public Works

### **Weaknesses**

- Lack of Documentation on several procedures
- Many of the Standard Operating Procedures are outdated
- Information on practices not uniformly known by staff

### **Opportunities**

- Documentation of experienced staff practices
- Streamline procedures
- Update work platforms for electronics and information sharing in GIS in the work process
- Centralize information under County Standards update

### **Challenges**

- Communications
- Access to information
- Consistency in application
- Continued means to update practices and procedures

Public Works began the self-assessment process approximately five years ago by reviewing existing policies and procedures and comparing those to the practices included in the *Public Works Management Practices Manual*. The department then began the improvement phase of the self-assessment process whereby those practices that needed to be updated or developed were addressed. Both the self-assessment and improvement phase have required an extensive amount of staff participation, typically at the line or functioning level in order to clearly identify and address on-the-ground methods and needs. The success of accreditation the process is founded on engaging staff at all levels in the review and development of procedures.

This improvement phase is ongoing, however, the department feels it is at an appropriate point to provide a report of the accomplishments thus far and make the final push toward accreditation. Reviewing the status of the effort with your Board in a public forum is a part of the accreditation process and allows stakeholders outside the department to understand and comment on our procedures/practices.

Significant accomplishments of the improvement phase of the self-assessment process include, but are not limited to:

- A Bridge Maintenance Plan
- A Post Earthquake Response Plan for Bridges
- A Storm Damage Tracking and Processing Procedure
- A Sidewalk Maintenance Program
- Updates to the County Public Improvement Standards
- Updates to Street Maintenance Procedures including a snow removal procedure
- Storm Water Management Implementation guidelines for staff
- A Construction Contract Change Order Approval and Processing Procedure
- Energy Consumption Reports at Water and Wastewater Facilities
- Updates to the Capital Project Development Manual

APWA accreditation is a distinction bestowed on agencies or departments within an agency that have used the self-assessment process to assist in developing a strategic plan. Public Works entered into an agreement with APWA in October of 2011 which established a three year timeline to complete the accreditation process. The process includes an evaluation by an accreditation team who will perform an onsite evaluation and review of documentation produced during the accreditation process. Staff is concluding the update of practices to be finalized this September and a final review by APWA is being scheduled for October of this year. There are currently about 90 accredited agencies nationwide; only three are County Public Works Departments in California.

#### **OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT/IMPACT**

County Counsel has provided input on Practices/Procedures.

General Services has been consulted on joint and similar efforts (Fleet Services, Bidding/Contracting, and Construction Management).

The department has worked with APWA accreditation team throughout the process.

## **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The direct cost of pursuing accreditation is a \$14,600 fee previously paid to APWA to administer the accreditation program as well as reimbursement of travel expenses to the accreditation team for the final site visit to be scheduled in October 2014. This cost is currently included in the Public Works Department Budget.

There also has been significant staff costs related to the review, improvement and updating of department policies, however, these tasks should be a routine part of a well-run department and are included in the budget for Public Works Department labor. Some agencies hire additional staff to manage and complete the accreditation process, however, Public Works has used existing staff in its efforts thus far. This has been particularly challenging considering the effort has coincided with the economic downturn which resulted in reduced staffing levels and increased workloads.

## **RESULTS**

An accredited Public Works Department will contribute to a well-governed community. By ensuring that policies and procedures meet APWA standards, the process will improve Public Works' overall performance, the delivery of public services, increase professionalism, and instill pride and confidence in the department among staff, elected officials, and the public.

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