

VILLAGE OF CROTON-ON-HUDSON

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATIONAL AND OPERATIONS ASSESSMENT AND PLAN

Village Board of Trustees Meeting
February 5, 2025





APPROACH

- Met and interviewed department staff
- Conducted analysis of current workload, operations and trends
- Comparative review of functional alignment and organizational structure with other villages
- Interviewed and collected surveys from Village stakeholders
- Evaluated the strength and challenges of the department
- Incorporated operational best practices

CURRENT ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT FUNCTIONS

Functional Area	Description
Village Infrastructure Engineering Services (10% of 1 full time engineer)	The Village Engineer's Office provides assistance for special projects • Prepare design, scope and specifications for small Village projects. ▪ Oversee and manage contract engineers used for Village projects. ▪ Conduct assessments of the condition of Village infrastructure as requested. Superintendent of Public Works – primary responsibility for asset management & engineering services..
Land Use Planning and Development	▪ Conduct site plan technical reviews of proposed land use projects. ▪ Support Village community development efforts. ▪ Provide professional and administrative support to the Planning Board, ZBA, the Water Control Commission and other Village advisory boards. ▪ Coordinate and manage large development project.
NYS Uniform Fire Prevention & Building Code and NYS Stretch Code	▪ Review construction plans & issue building permits for construction projects. ▪ Conduct construction inspections and issue Certificates of Occupancy. ▪ Conduct Building Safety Inspections for assembly spaces; multi-family buildings and occupied non-residential buildings. ▪ Address non-compliance with Codes: voluntary compliance.
Village Codes	▪ Administer and enforce the Village Zoning Code. ▪ Administer and enforce Village Codes including: tree removal, property maintenance, sidewalks, signage, flood damage prevention, etc.
Real Property Assessment	▪ Establish values of real property & prepare annual assessment rolls. ▪ Maintain exemptions. ▪ Provide technical support to the Board of Assessment Review.

KEY OBSERVATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

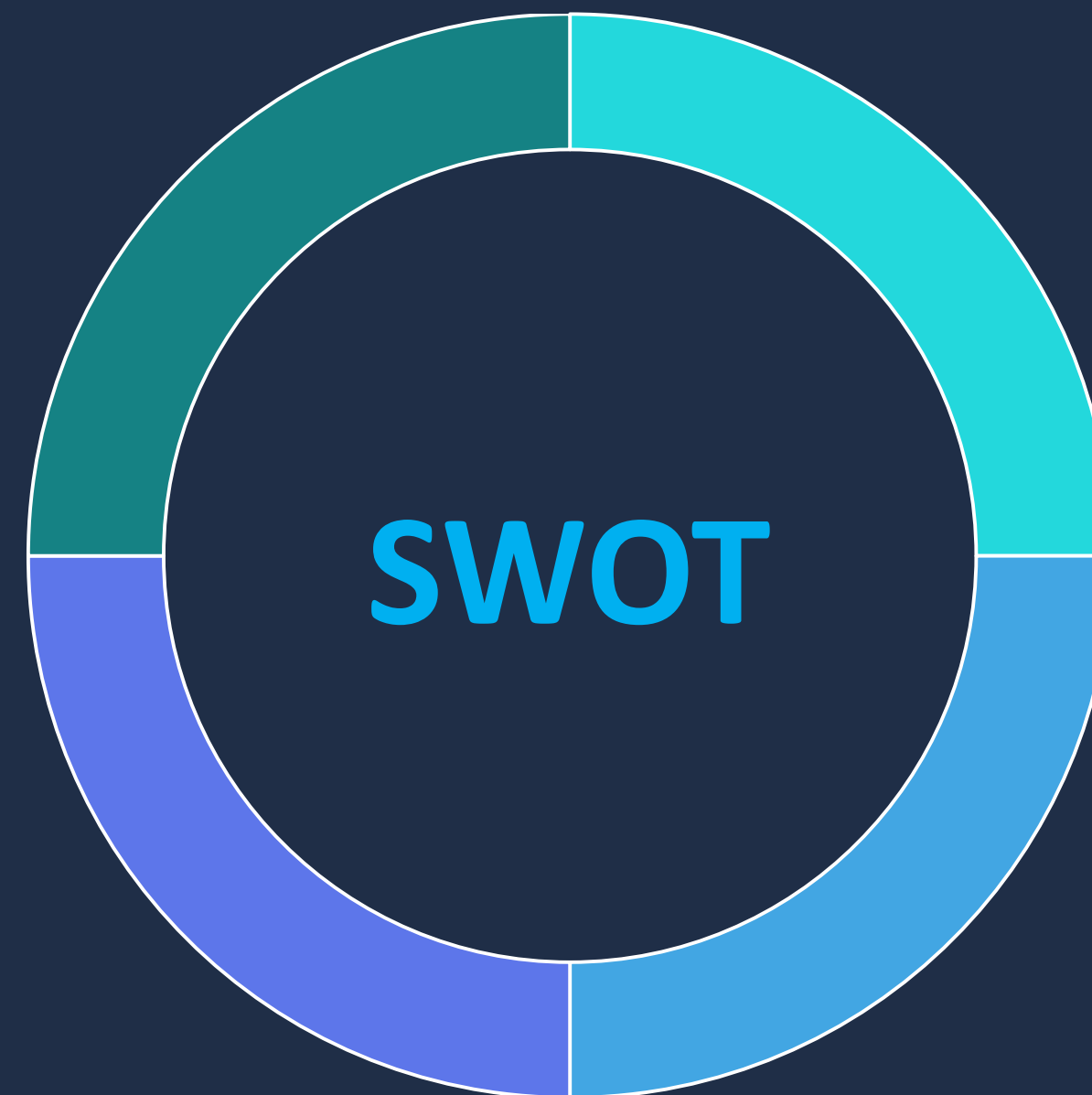
- Department recognized for excellent service delivery, technical expertise and responsiveness.
- Core of the department operations:
 - Land use planning/project management.
 - Enforcement of codes related to the built environment and quality of life.
- Increasing workload and complexity
 - Building and fire code workload - larger projects, multi-family housing, energy code
 - Potential 90% increase in fire safety inspections from 2020 to 2027.
 - Planning and development - Increase in projects related to land re-use; protection of natural resources, waterfront development, multi-family housing, affordable housing
 - Proactive Village policy agenda also impacting workload.
 - Affordable housing; accessory dwelling units; frequency of multi-family housing inspections, focus on property maintenance, environmental protections.

STRENGTHS

- One-stop-shop for land use and building planning, development and code enforcement
- Technical engineering expertise
- Knowledgeable staff
- Responsiveness to residents & stakeholders
- 20+ years of stability due to same department head.
- Quality planning and oversight of development projects.
- Cross training and cross certifications

OPPORTUNITIES

- Preparing for the future from a position of strength
- Expand staffing levels to stabilize operations
- Retain One-Stop-Shop alignment of functions
- Create hierarchical structure
- Institutionalize practices and procedures
- Enhance management tools and practices
- Workflow technology solutions
- Enhance proactive enforcement program



WEAKNESSES

- Retirements/ transitions/ succession planning
- Wide span of department functions
- Inability to meet current workloads
- Competing demands
- Inconsistencies
- Limited technology optimization
- Competing demands
- Limited backup resources
- Frustration with enforcement tools
- Reactive rather than proactive code administration and enforcement
- Flat organizational structure

THREATS

- Loss of institutional knowledge through departures
- Continuous expansion of NYS code requirements
- Significant increase in workload
- Increasing community expectations
- Expanded Village codes
- Safety concerns “falling through the cracks”
- Increased expectations
- Fiscal challenges
- Code non-compliance

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGY 1: FUNCTIONAL RE-ALIGNMENT

OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

1. Status quo
2. Re-constitute the Engineering Department as the Planning, Zoning, Building and Codes Department.
3. Consolidate the Engineering Department within the Department of Public Works.
4. Extract the land use planning and development functions and place with an alternate village department or create a new stand-alone department.

EARLY ON IN THE PROCESS, THE VALUE OF THE ONE-STOP SHOP FOR LAND USE PLANNING, ZONING AND CODES EMERGED AS THE PREFERRED ALIGNMENT OF FUNCTIONS.



- Mission focus: land use planning and health and safety of the built and physical environment (90% of current operations).
- Maintain customer focus: one-stop-shop.
- Effective and efficient alignment of department workload and staffing.

Functional Alignment Goals

- Maintain and build on the strengths of the department.
- Increase Code Compliance and timeliness of compliance.
- Address workload issues.
- Build in department resiliency and staff supervision.
- Optimize the alignment of engineers assignments to their technical training and skills.

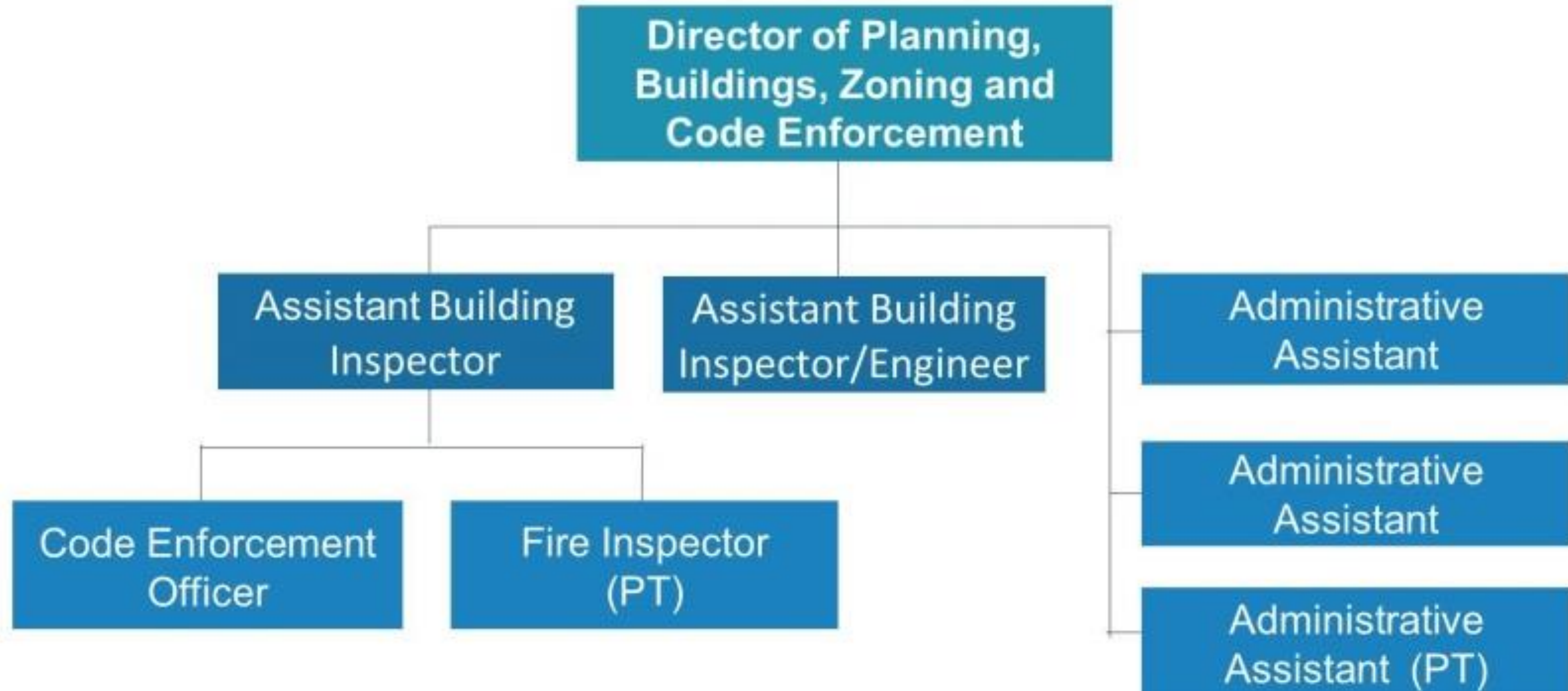
Functional Alignment Components

- Maintain the core mission of the department: land use planning and codes.
- Complete the shift of the engineering services to public works.
- Consider consolidation of the Assessor function at the town level.
 - 70% of NYS villages no longer perform the property assessment function.
 - Study outlines the legal process and outlines considerations in your decision making.

Strategy 2: Organizational Restructuring and Staffing Improvements

- **Director of Planning, Buildings, Zoning and Code Enforcement:** Engineer, an architect or a municipal land use planner, with relevant license/certification, experience and progressive responsibility.
- Maintain **Assistant Building Inspector/Engineer (PE)** reports to the Director, duties: 1) Building permit application and building plan reviews and construction inspections; 2) Engineering site plan reviews and project monitoring; 3) Staff assigned boards; 4) Consult with land owners/contractors.
- Establish a **Codes Compliance Division**
 - Proposed **NEW Assistant Building Inspector** (working supervisor) that reports to the Director.
 - Provide supervision over the fire inspector and the code enforcement officer.
 - Perform construction permit reviews, construction and fire safety inspections.
 - Enhance operating procedures and proactive compliance and enforcement measures.
 - The fire inspector and code enforcement officer would continue with their current job duties.
 - Require NYS Code Enforcement Officer certification for all professional staff.
 - Cross train staff in the Codes Compliance Division.
- Retain **Administrative Staff and Staffing Levels;** refocus to workflow automation.

Organizational Structure



Organizational Redesign Phasing

PHASE I: STABILIZE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS

PHASE II: ADVANCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESTRUCTURING

- Consider creation of proposed Assistant Building Inspector Position.
- Determine Public Works Needs for engineering assistance.
- Evaluate capacity of Assistant Building Inspector/Engineer to provide engineering support to Public Works.
- Make determination and timing on the consolidation of the assessor's function.

PHASE III: FORMALIZE THE CREATION OF RE-STRUCTURED DEPARTMENT

- Make the necessary Village Code amendments.
- Consolidate the Assessor's function at the Town of Cortlandt (or create a stand-alone operation reporting to the Village Manager).
- Formalize the "Village Engineer" role in the Department of Public Works and make the necessary Village Code amendments as necessary.

Strategy 3: Department Resiliency and Flexibility

- Retain a Land Use Planning Firm to Provide “As Needed” Services to add capacity as needed:
 - Perform technical support services on projects on an as assigned basis.
 - Coordinate and facilitate between and among parties.
 - Review planning board applications and conduct Site Plan Reviews
 - Provide technical support and reports for the Director, Board of Trustees, Planning Board and the ZBA.
- Improve the span of control within the department
- Cross certification and training of professional staff.

Strategy 4: Advance Proactive Code Compliance Efforts

Fire Safety

- Host annual/bi-annual fire safety and property maintenance trainings for representatives of assembly spaces, multi-family dwellings and non-residential occupancies.
- Develop and provide user friendly pre-inspection checklists.
- Develop templated graduated letters and notices of violation to facilitate achieve compliance re: notice of non-compliance; then referral to court.
- Periodic compare the fire inspection facility lists with assessment rolls.

Community Communication

- Conduct ongoing community scans to proactively identify code violations.
- Utilize various means to educate residents on building code and property maintenance and other quality of life codes.
 - Target communication to new homeowners and realtors.
 - Capitalize on community events such as clean up days.
 - Send reminders to prior year non-compliant property owners prior to next inspection.
 - Provide general information: What Requires a Building Permit/What does not?

Strategy 5: Advance the Use of Technology and Workflow Automation

- Benefits
 - Improved oversight at management, supervisory and task level.
 - Supports data driven decision making.
 - Real time access to overdue inspections, overdue work; workload trends, etc.
 - Improved communication with property owners and developers.
 - Standardization of work activities
 - Gains in efficiency
 - Potential integration between building permit, code enforcement, zoning and land use planning
- Workflow automation includes:
 - Applications, plan reviews and permitting approvals.
 - Field based inspection report development and distribution.
 - Document development and templated documents (inspection reports, notice of violations,
 - Integration with other system such as GIS mapping and parcel data.
 - Enforcement actions
 - Routing of documents between staff; residents and contractors based on pre-determined mapping and village sign-offs
 - Records storage, indexing and retrieval can be automated
 - On-line scheduling

Strategy 6: Enhance Management Practices

- Standard Operating Procedures/Guidelines
 - The Department has a skilled, knowledgeable department head and staff
 - It will be important that this knowledge be institutionalized
 - Routinization of workflows creates structure for staff, reduces stress and facilitates achievement of compliance. Staff freed up to focus on compliance and the difficult non-compliant cases.
- Establish Work Activity Standards and Interval work plans
- Work Reporting, Documentation and Supervisory Oversight
 - Ex: Timeliness of inspections, re-inspections, notice of violations, etc.
- Data driven decision making – use of trend data, data dashboard, case aging reports, etc.

THANK YOU

