MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 1, 2014

TO: Honorable Edwin M. Lee, Mayor
   Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors
   Honorable Members of the Building Inspection Commission
   Steve Kawa, Mayor’s Chief of Staff
   All DBI Staff

FROM: Tom C. Hui, S.E., C.B.O.
   Director

SUBJECT: Six-Month Performance Update (October 2013-April 2014)

Please see below for details behind the initiatives under way at the Department of Building Inspection under my leadership. The Department continues to make significant progress in achieving its goals of implementing customer-service improvements to manage the enormous demands generated by the strongest building boom cycle we have seen in decades. Simultaneously to meeting these customer and market-driven demands, DBI also continues to provide critical City Team support – along with other Departments – in assisting the Mayor in his Administration’s efforts on behalf of safe and affordable housing, helping the City prepare for recovery from the next major earthquake, and taking steps to sustain a flourishing local economy that benefits all San Franciscans. We are continuing to develop and update our strategic plan and our operations plan, completing the implementation of recommendations from the Business Process Reengineering (BPR) Report, and implementing performance metrics to measure our efforts and to establish ‘Best Practices’ baseline data for continuous Building Department improvements over the years to come.

Highlights over the past six months, which illustrate my leadership and organizational changes within DBI, include:

- Continuing to receive customer appreciation for new 44-Station Cash Management System we began six months ago, iPayment, enabling customers to complete transactions throughout DBI, thereby saving customers time/making more efficient use of staff resources.

- Continuing to implement DBI’s new Accela Permit and Project Tracking System into its final staff and user training phase prior to the system’s ‘Go Live’ implementation date in September 2014. We are making all staff familiar with the new PTS features and capabilities, and fine-tuning recommendations to assure reliability, public satisfaction,
improved accountability and significantly improved transparency of the development review and approval process.

- Launched a new SRO Elevator Working Group, per the Mayor’s request, to identify the numbers and locations of non-working elevators – especially those necessary for the City’s most vulnerable populations. To date, preliminary meetings with representatives of Cal-OSHA, which has state-wide jurisdiction over elevator safety, as well as with elevator company and service vendors, we have helped set key agenda items for upcoming public meetings. Chaired by Deputy Director for Inspection Services Dan Lowrey, recommendations are due to Director Hui by June 2014, and will be conveyed to the Mayor by July 1st.

- Continuing implementation of the Mandatory Soft Story Seismic Retrofit Ordinance. Over the past six months, DBI received more than 1,400 Screening Forms and issued 26 permits to do retrofitting work. DBI is beginning an advertising campaign to motivate 4,500 building owners of buildings expected to collapse without retrofitting following the next major earthquake. By law, owners must hire an engineer/architect, complete and submit the Screening Forms to DBI before the September 15, 2014 deadline to comply.

- Held numerous free public workshops to educate more than 2,500 property owners on the Mandatory Soft Story Retrofit Ordinance, and provided detailed guidance on steps owners must take to comply with this new local law, thereby enabling the City to recover more quickly from the next major earthquake and preserving essential housing stock.

- At the Mayor’s request, co-chaired an Affordable Housing/Preservation of Existing Housing Task Force that produced recommendations now being implemented to help reach the Mayor’s goal of 30,000 housing units by 2020. These include a new Priority Process Information Sheet, signed by all key reviewing City Departments, to assure fast-tracking that will produce and preserve 100 percent affordable housing.

- Worked closely with Board President Chiu, and other Supervisors, as well as with the Mayor’s Office to finalize legislation enabling voluntary legalization of “In-Laws” and thereby preserving sorely needed affordable housing, while addressing building life-safety issues. The new law takes effect in mid-May 2014, when DBI will produce a Screening Form for professionals to assist in the owner’s decision-making process.

- Continued to implement a key recommendation from the June 2013 Civil Grand Jury Report, focused on updating and completing implementation of all recommendations from the Business Process Reengineering (BPR) report. We expect to finalize all but two BPR recommendations by the end of the current fiscal year.

- Continuing DBI Executive Team discussions to review DBI’s Notice of Violations’ and code enforcement process – per a key Civil Grand Jury recommendation – and taking steps to clean up/eliminate cases that may, in fact, have been abated, as well as to harmonize diverse databases to facilitate more accurate reporting and tracking. While DBI is exceeding management objectives in approximately 95 percent of all cases, based
upon the total number of complaints received and investigated, there is clearly room for improvement that the DBI Executive Team continues to implement.

- Continued to work with DPW and DBI consultants on a Space Needs/Facilities Study of DBI, examining the existing building’s space uses and identifying ways to enhance staff productivity and to improve customer services. Having briefed the Building Inspection Commission in April on multiple scenarios to increase DBI customer service space by 30 percent to meet current demand, we will present in mid-May to the Capital Planning Committee and to the Mayor’s Budget Team, a capital project that is funded fully by Building Department self-generated fees for permits, plan reviews, inspections and code enforcement. Per the needs assessment space study, the recommended approach would enhance staff productivity and improve dramatically the customer experience with the process of reviewing and issuing more than 65,000 permits annually.

- Made impressive progress with our ‘one-stop,’ over-the-counter reviews on the Fifth Floor, where 90 percent of all permits are issued in one-two days, by adding essential customer convenience elements such as successfully implementing a new agreement with the Unified School District that enables DBI to collect school-related impact fees on the Fifth Floor Over-the-Counter services, requested by the Mayor’s Office; and the addition of a workstation for a senior DPH Environmental Inspector on the Fifth floor to assist customers with projects located in the newly expanded Maher Toxics Zone, per newly-implemented Board of Supervisors’ legislation. With results from an April 2014 workshop on DBI’s One-Stop Permit Operation, it is clear that Planning and DPW, among other departments, want additional space to meet growing customer demands in the immediate future.

- Continuing staff training in a broad range of skills, from required technical training to stay abreast of new codes—a new code cycle began January 1, 2014—as well as increasing DBI staff preparedness to respond immediately and effectively following the next major earthquake/disaster, including National Incident Management System (NIMS) training, thereby enabling the City to be resilient and able to recover quickly from a disaster. Staff is committed to our ongoing ‘Cross-training’ program to ensure familiarity with process details outside specific Civil Service classifications, and thus more able to assist if circumstances require additional flexibility, as well as provide staff advancement and leadership development.

- Continuing annual and biannual staff trainings to ensure complete familiarity with and implementation of the DBI Code of Professional Conduct, adherence to Sunshine Ordinance requirements, Sexual Harassment Prevention Training, Annual Form 700 filings and City Attorney guidelines on appropriate City Employee ethical behavior.

- Continuing to update customer guidance through ever-evolving code changes. In the past six months, we have created 22 Information Sheets, and five (5) Administrative Bulletins, on a wide range of code compliance issues -- and posted these on the DBI Website and on Twitter in an ongoing effort to inform and assist customer understanding of the Department’s permitting requirements and procedures.
• Continuing to fill key staff positions, including the Deputy Director for Administration — where we are in the final stages of selection — as well as recruiting candidates to serve as an Assistant Director and a Legislative and Public Affairs Director to ensure DBI’s managerial and budgetary capabilities due to always evolving legislation affecting the building code and DBI daily operations. Our process includes public posting of these positions, examinations, expert panel interviews and thorough reference and background checks.

• Continuing to review the results from field-usage by 70 field inspectors, smart phone devices enabling inspectors to enter field findings directly into our network — again demonstrating how DBI is increasingly harnessing technologies in ways that make public access to our work easier, faster, more accurate and more up to date.

• Continuing to prioritize DBI’s ongoing efforts, and significant budgetary support, to community programs that focus on the satisfactory resolution of building structural, and habitability, issues affecting property owners and tenants. Under my leadership and direction, DBI continues to work cooperatively and aggressively with non-profits and SROs to ensure that building and housing code compliance is achieved in order to keep San Francisco rental housing safe, and code-compliant, for residents.

Thank you for your consideration of DBI’s Performance Update for the past six months. Please call me directly if you have any questions or wish to discuss any of the items in this report.