



4 Tips to Issue Permits Faster and Protect Your Municipality from Fraud

When accepting professional engineering documents, municipalities have a responsibility to verify each document's integrity and authenticity while also ensuring that they issue related permits in a timely fashion. The advice to just "go digital" is often given to municipalities that want to tackle both issues, but long-term, sustainable change requires more than a lofty, general goal.

Not sure where to start? Here are 4 simple and actionable tips to help your municipality create and implement streamlined workflows that will accelerate permit processing and prevent fraud.

1 - Make it a Requirement: **Vanquish the Dreaded** **Mountains of Paperwork** **for Good**

The advice to save time by digitalizing is practically a cliché. But some parts of administrative workflows are often overlooked in this discussion. A common trap many organizations fall prey to when digitalizing is leaving out the documents they are receiving from regulated professionals or firms.

By strongly encouraging the use of electronic documents such as reports or drawings that have been properly authenticated with professional digital signatures, municipalities can accelerate processes across

the board, benefiting professionals and firms, as well as municipal employees.

Many regulated professionals belonging to professional associations have access to professional digital signatures, which enable the creation of authentic and non-repudiable electronic documents, thereby helping to decrease the time and effort required for municipal employees to complete approval work cycles.

2 - Bridging **Interdepartmental Gaps:** **Turn Weeks into Hours**

It's no secret that approval processes can be lengthy, especially when there are numerous stakeholders. The time required to transfer a document between departments and to securely share it with external stakeholders can extend timelines, causing headaches for municipal workers, professionals, and firms, who expect quick, smooth processes and the ability to complete transactions entirely online.

Whether it's getting approval for a construction permit, submitting engineering documents for acceptance and archiving, or requesting a budget increase for a municipally funded project, delays and administrative barriers due to a lack of standardized processes can have real and negative impacts on firms and professionals practicing in your municipality.

Such failures to meet their expectations can turn an otherwise positive interaction sour.

Accepting digitally signed, compliant professional documents is a great way to speed up approvals and ensure that professionals have a positive experience throughout their interaction with their municipality because original documents can safely circulate between departments and stakeholders without the need for printing or scanning.

Municipalities can also take advantage of the time savings and peace of mind that digital signatures can provide. In fact, administrative officers, staff and clerks can streamline their workflows and do away with the print-sign-scan cycle with digital signatures for individuals such as CertifiO Cloud.

3 – Ironclad Fraud Protection: Have Absolute Confidence in the Documents you Approve

Although professional documents such as engineering and architectural plans have long relied on physical seals and signatures, these methods are far from foolproof. In fact, there have been many cases of professional fraud resulting in real consequences for the municipalities that accepted the documents and for their citizens.

When accepting professional documents, municipalities bear the responsibility of verifying that they are authentic and compliant to ensure their citizens' protection. As such, it is of paramount importance for them to have strong fraud-detection systems in place.

With legally reliable digital signatures, professional fraud is practically eliminated without the need to manually check each signer's status on their association registry. In fact, by requiring your providers to sign drawings with professional digital signatures such as CertifiO, you can instantly verify that the professional whose seal appears on the document is the one who signed it and do so

directly in any free PDF reader such as Adobe Acrobat or ConsignO Desktop.

This concept is known as unimpeachable identity and accepting only documents signed with such legally reliable digital signatures is the best protection against fraud for municipalities.

4 - Looking Forward: Ensure the Integrity and Legal Reliability of your Archived Documents

Municipalities bear great responsibility for documenting and archiving the processes for which they are responsible, from municipal budgets to public works and construction permits. If you digitalize your manual processes, it is important to adopt tools that can trace the source of any problem that may arise in the decades to come, which requires having absolute confidence in each document's integrity and, if necessary, its non-repudiability through time. Not every electronic signature fits your needs.

However, professional digital signatures such as CertifiO for Professionals have been specifically designed to ensure compliance with legal requirements. In addition, they ensure the signed document retains the necessary information through time to validate its integrity and prove that it has not been tampered with or modified in any way.

By opting to require electronic originals signed using a professional digital signature, municipalities can ensure that there is no doubt as to the identity and standing of the signer. As a result, they can validate documents knowing they meet the authentication standards of the regulators for these industries.

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