



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
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January 22, 2014

The Honorable Beth Kerttula
Alaska House of Representatives

RE: Universal Space Standards

Dear Representative Kerttula:

The state is in receipt of your letter dated January 21, 2014 in which various concerns are posed and requests made in regards to the implementation of Universal Space Standards (USS) in state owned and leased facilities. Your letter brings up several points which I have responded to individually below:

1. *Differing needs of state employees and physical space*

The Department of Administration (DOA) is aware that in many cases, the needs of one employee will vary from that of another. To this end, DOA has worked very closely with the management team of the occupying agencies for sites where USS has been implemented to date to ensure a complete understanding of the work being performed by each group. This process of early, often, and open communication with affected agencies will continue as the USS moves forward. The DOA utilizes the expertise of each occupying agency as the final plan is developed in cooperation with professional space planners and the Commissioner's office of each agency to ensure the agency has not only the opportunity to point out concerns, but to also present solutions such as the dive gear lockers, firearm storage and more efficient use of technology for mapping included in the plan at the Douglas Island Building.

2. *Inter and Intra Departmental Relations*

Similar to the differing needs of employees, the DOA is not the final decision maker in regards to where a group or program is located within a space. DOA relies on the expertise of the occupying agencies to ensure the department is comfortable with the location of a specific group and how they interact with their co-workers. This flexibility regarding the in-suite location of a group is critical as the occupying agencies know and understand the intricacies of their departments. In regards to storage capacity and location, staff at the occupying agencies provided their space and storage needs to their management team, the concerns are passed on to DOA and the space planner who makes changes to the plan to address the concerns. Once the new plan is developed, it is presented to the occupying agencies for further review and comment. This planning process is followed through many variations until the occupying agencies approve the final plan. Only with the approval of the final plan by the occupying agencies will a USS project begin. A copy of the most recent Douglas Island Building Plan is attached for your review.

3. *Overstated Savings Estimates*

As you may know, each USS project is analyzed individually to determine if it is cost effective. Items such as current lease rate per square foot, number of square feet occupied, annual rent costs, capital construction costs, amortization and other factors are analyzed to ensure the project would result in a savings. If no saving is present, the USS is not implemented. Estimated savings have been represented as ranges, more projects completed equals an increase in overall long term savings. In times of decreasing budgets, the efficient use of

space is one area in which the state can reduce its overall operational costs while still maintaining and providing services to the public.

4. *Lack of Employee Involvement*

While it is possible the perception of a “top down” process exists; please know that DOA communicated with each agency and provided opportunities for all staff to have input and will in the future continue to refine the process. Multiple workshops were held for procurement, facilities, rank and file staff and management alike. Questions presented by staff or agency management were addressed and answered by DOA. It is important to note, while DOA requests input from the occupying agencies, it is up to each agency to gather questions, concerns, space needs and unique requirements and provide this information to DOA as the process moves forward. How much or how little input rank and file employees have is at the discretion of the agency.

In regards to the State Leasing and Facilities Manager still occupying a large corner office in the Atwood Building, at this time, it is a true statement; however, the USS is being implemented on the 19th floor DOA offices over the next 6 months to include the removal of all private offices other than the Commissioner’s Office, this includes eliminating the office for the Leasing and Facilities Manager.

In regards to your requested follow up, I have addressed each request below:

Item 1: *Communication records between Douglas based ADF&G and ADOC employees and DGS as well as the state architectural and design contractors regarding the needs and desires related to the Douglas office remodel.*

Response: As discussed above, DOA’s communication was with the management teams at ADF&G and ADOC respectively. This was done as way to collect the comments and ensure a single point of contact existed that would communicate for the department. This approach was chosen as DOA wanted to ensure they were responsive to the questions posed. Having a single point of contact is critical to projects of this nature.

Item 2: *Any memoranda or analysis of what will be done with space that is freed up in the Douglas Building:*

Response: At this point, a new tenant has not been identified for the vacant space. While an analysis has not been completed at this time, the identification of a tenant will include an analysis various factors including lease expiration dates, agency needs, number of “PCN’s” current lease rates, projected rate in the Douglas building, etc. Parking is addressed on a case by case basis and will be in compliance with not only all code requirements, but with bargaining unit agreements as well. In fact, parking was one of the concerns brought forth by the agencies at the Douglas Island Building. To address this concern, DOA secured an additional 40 parking spots in the Douglas Boat Harbor parking lot for exclusive state use during weekday hours.

Item 3: *Record of requests for special accommodation or waivers from USS:*

Response: While a waiver process does exist, as discussed above, the plans are ultimately approved by the occupying agency and as such the waiver process has been minimal. Please know the waivers that have been submitted are predominately based on employee accommodation and compatibility such as an agency that has all Herman Miller products and needs to add a single cubicle.

Item 4: *Electrical Load reduction:*

Response: From a statewide perspective, the reduction of personal appliances in state owned and leased space is driven by various factors including electrical consumption. Every appliance in a building costs money to operate. Working to reduce and eliminate personal appliances in individual work space reduces the

buildings electrical load, prevents circuit overload situations, reduces fire hazards and saves money. Fully equipped cafés are being provided as remodels occur and include features such as full size refrigerators, Kuerig coffee makers, and dishwashers.

Item 5: *Studies used to create the standards:*

Response: Please see the attached Space Standards Analysis Report conducted by ECI/Hyer in March 2012.


In addition, the following website contains various USS related documents that may provide further insight into the USS program guidelines.

<http://doa.alaska.gov/dgs/USS/>

Understanding the short time you have remaining, I wanted to make sure I responded to you in a timely manner. However, please understand that gathering copies of communication records and waivers is time consuming. If after reviewing this letter, you still feel the need for DOA to gather this information, please let me know and I will instruct staff to begin the process.

In closing, please know the DOA has, and will continue to take the fiscal constraints of the state, the mission of the affected agencies, and the business needs of the employees into consideration when implementing the USS.

Sincerely,



Curtis Thayer
Commissioner
Department of Administration