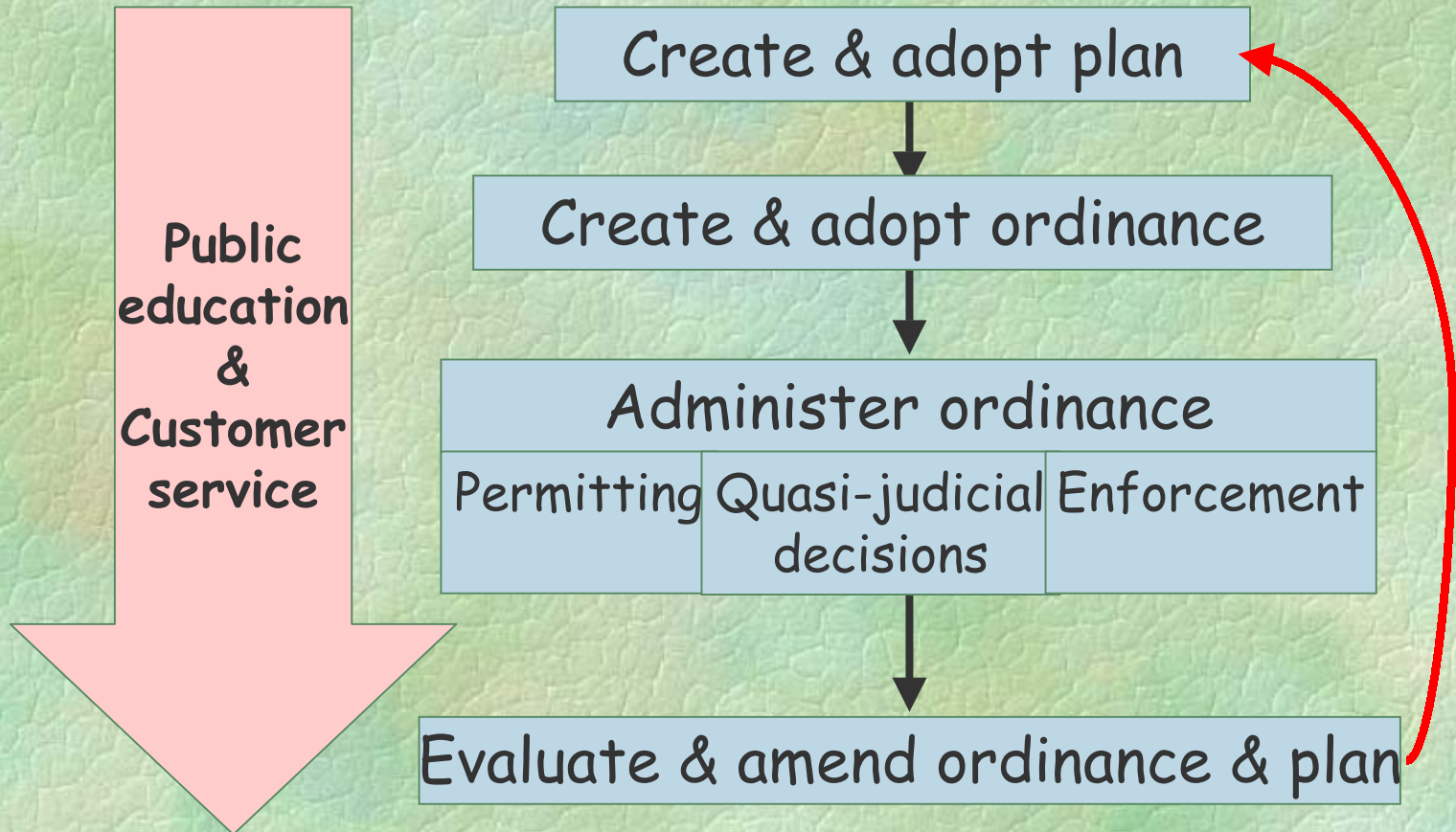


# Customer Service



For planning and zoning  
departments

# Regulatory process



# Customer Service

☛ Who

☛ What

☛ Why

☛ How

☛ Dealing with "Difficult" People

☛ How are you doing?

# Who is our customer?

permit applicant

citizen

taxpayer

client John Q. Public

property owner

that #%@\* &\$

# Other customers...

- 🌿 The County Board
  - 🌿 Planning and Zoning Committee
  - 🌿 Zoning Director
- or
- 🌿 the land and water resources of your community

# What does a customer expect?

## 👉 Information !

- Is a permit is required? WHY?
- How do I fill out the form
- Why do I have to submit that?
- How long will it take?
- What will the hearing be like?

# What does a customer expect?

- 👉 **Courtesy**
- 👉 **Respect**
- 👉 **Professional behavior**



**It's not just what you say,  
but also how you say it.**

# Why do customer service?

## ☛ Effectiveness

developing personal relationships:

- buy-in /support for the ordinance
- appreciation for the resource

## ☛ Expectations

## ☛ Enjoyment!

the experience for you and the public

What are the

**Top 10 Tips!**

for good  
**Customer Service?**

# Tips for Good Customer Service

## The Office

- convenient location and parking
- field offices if needed
- access without coming to your office - web, phone, fax

# Tips for Good Customer Service

## In the Office 1

- clean reception area
- space to work with customers
- encourage appointments
- staff to assist walk-ins
- self-help area with forms, handouts and brochures

# Tips for Good Customer Service

## In the Office 2

- trained, personable counter staff
- listen!
- help the customer know what to ask
- provide answers and information wherever possible
- if answer is not available, identify who will get back to them, and when

# Tips for Good Customer Service

## Telephone

- customers know where to call, and they can get through
- trained personable receptionist to answer general questions
- help the caller know what to ask
- take a detailed message, offer voicemail, or send information

# Tips for Good Customer Service

## Telephone

- customers know where to call, and they can get through
- trained personable receptionist to answer general questions
- help the caller know what to ask
- take a detailed message, offer voicemail, or send information

# Tips for Good Customer Service

## Telephone 2

### Voicemail greeting

- friendly, not too long
- identify your in/out schedule
- invite a detailed message
- say when you'll check messages and return calls

# Tips for Good Customer Service

## Telephone 3

- RETURN calls promptly
- explain steps in the review process
  - permit
  - variance
  - conditional use
- use plain ENGLISH



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# Tips for Good Customer Service

## During an Inspection

- schedule appointment, or notify
- be on time, introduce yourself
- explain why you're there, and what you are looking for
- respect private property
- explain what you saw, and what the next steps are

# Tips for Good Customer Service

## • Hearing or Committee Meeting

- notify of time and place
- explain the process - before, and at
- explain the standards
- identify when public input can be offered
- if public input is not allowed, explain why

# Tips for Good Customer Service

## ✿ Correspondence and Permits

- provide clear, factual information
- identify permit terms, conditions and expiration date
- highlight special concerns
- include rights to appeal

# Difficult People...



# Dealing with Difficult People

How do you deal with someone who's angry, upset or critical?

**L**isten

**E**mpathize

**A**pologize

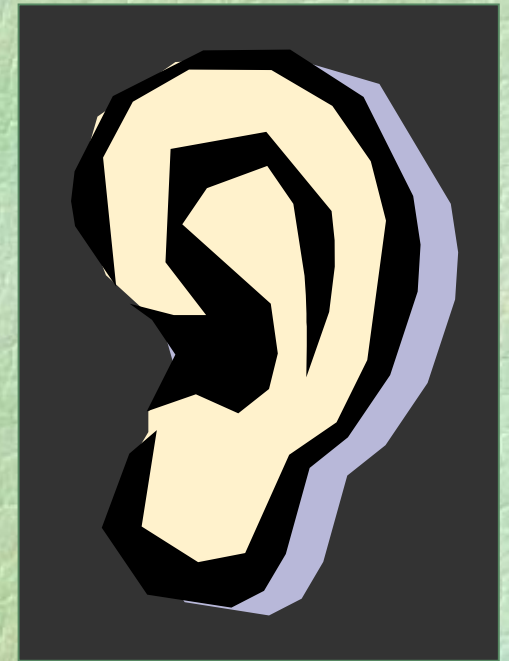
**D**o something

Joan Lloyd,  
syndicated columnist

# Dealing with Difficult People

## Listen

- Listen to the question or concern
- ask further questions if needed
- Be Calm



# Dealing with Difficult People

## Empathize

- Acknowledge and agree

*“Yes, this would be a good time for construction.”*

*“If I understand what you’ve said, you’re concerned that....”*

- Remain Calm

# Dealing with Difficult People

## Apologize

- give them benefit of the doubt

*“I’m sorry I wasn’t able to return your call yesterday”*

- or if there's miscommunication

*“I’m sorry, maybe I didn’t explain that very clearly....”*

# Dealing with Difficult People

## Do something

- offer clear follow-up
- explain why it is this way
- offer alternative options

*“I would be happy to mail you a study about...”*

*“I’ll help you fill out the form, so you can file the application today.”*

# Things to Remember...

- ☞ Many folks have only one "zoning experience" - so **BE PATIENT** and thorough
- ☞ Explain the information, and explain **WHY** - the reason behind the codes



# More things to Remember...

- ☞ Use plain English - avoid jargon!
- ☞ Be honest about review times
- ☞ Meet stated review times
- ☞ Say "no" EARLY
- ☞ Apologize for mistakes, delays

# How are you doing?

Try to see your office through the customer's eyes...

- Complaints
- surveys
- random calling
- focus groups
- industry groups
- Customer Comment Cards

