



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Meeting:

Date	October 16, 2014	Location	John W. Olver Community Room	Facilitator	Brian DeVriese
Time	4-5:30 pm	Duration	1.5 hours	Scribe:	Chris Brothers

STAFF:

Jim Cerone
Tom McDonald
Chris Brothers
Thomas McDonald
Andrew French
Phoebe Walker

ATTENDEES:

Jim Bonham – Buckland
Jacquie Boyden – Erving
Ray Purington - Gill
Brian DeVriese - Heath
Janice Boudreau - Rowe
Chuck Washer – Shelburne

REGRETS:

Jim Hawkins

ABSENT:

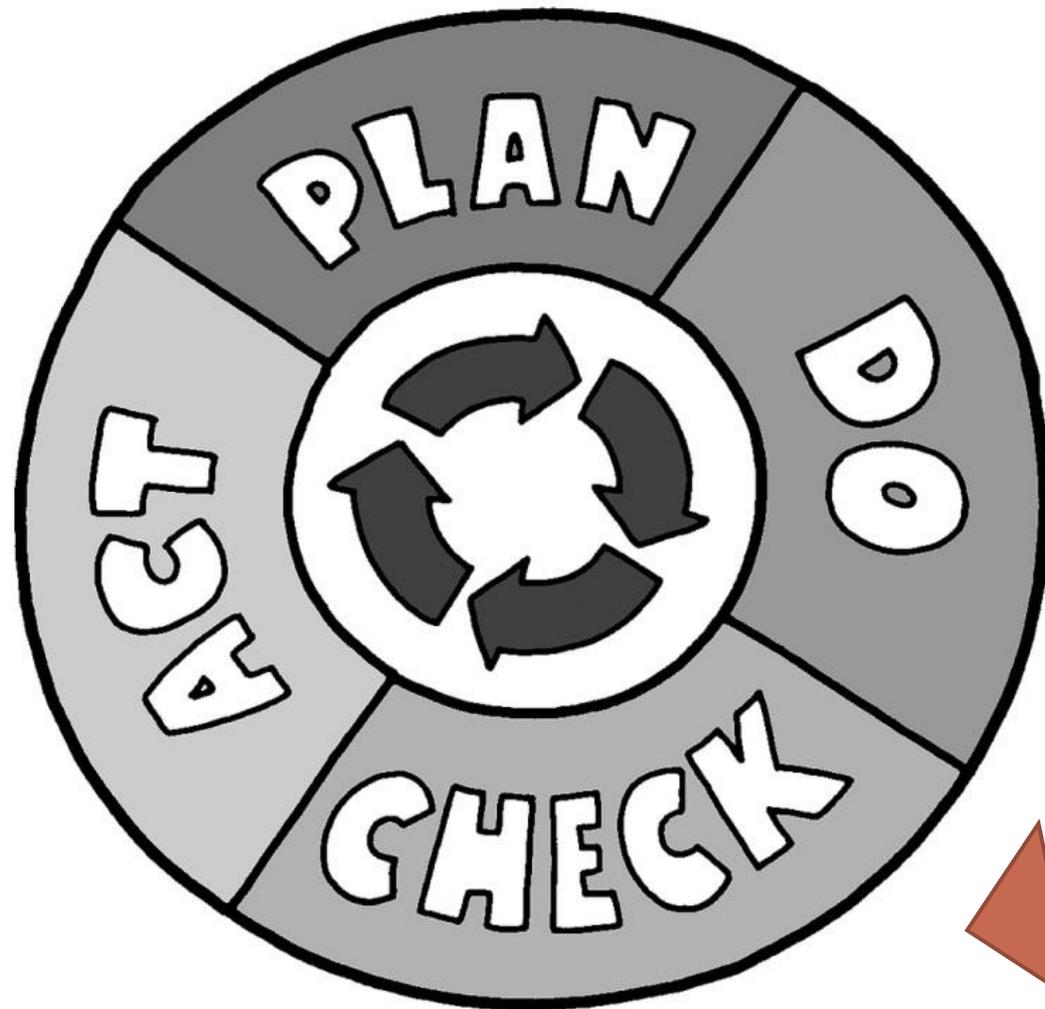
Ashfield
Bernardston
Charlemont
Conway
Hawley
Leverett
Leyden
Shutesbury
Whately

Agenda items	Discussion and Motions
Introductions	Introductions made. Minutes were not approved due to lack of a quorum.
Review Proposed Plumbing and Gas Fee Schedule changes	<p>Andy French needed to leave the meeting early so item #5 was discussed first. In an effort to bring revenue amounts closer in line with the expense for the Plumbing/Gas program Andy would like to propose raising some of the plumbing & gas fees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New dwellings to \$350, for both plumbing & gas • all other work \$75, • 1st fixture for gas to \$75, • gas water heaters to \$100 and eliminate Gas Tank installation. <p>New houses today are requiring more inspections. Andy is required to do inspections if they are requested. Ray P thought perhaps if we defined what the fee covers and anything more than that may required additional fees. Andy is inspecting an average of 25 new houses per year. Board was unable to vote on the proposal due to lack of a quorum, though a unanimous straw vote of approval was recorded. Committee will vote on the proposal at the January 2015 meeting provided there is a quorum, with the new fees taking effect in February 2015.</p>
Vote on Updated Operating Procedures.	Due to the fact that we did not have a quorum we will have to vote on the Operating Procedures in January 2015. Members discussed the number needed to have a quorum. The debate was between four towns and half the towns plus one (8). There were concerns that four seems to be too low. The Committee decided that as long as everyone receives information on what is to be voted on and they are aware, then 4 members would not be too low. Jim H will be asked to make individual invitations to Committee members before the next meeting to try to increase attendance.
Financial Report for FY 15.	Jim C explained the numbers on the report spreadsheet. The cumulative total fee revenue so far this year is about \$30,000 below target. There are some large projects coming up in several towns which should bring the revenue totals up. We will have to revisit amounts that the towns contribute to budget, as well as the waived fees at the next meeting in January 2015.
FY 16 Budget Preliminary Discussion	<p>The group had the following discussion of FY 16 budget issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jim C suggested no changes to the town assessments. The permit revenue we receive is about 80% of our budget, the town assessments covering the other 20%. • He also feels that we do not need to change the reserve upper limit amount at this time. • Would like to increase the FY 16 budget to include a 100hrs for a temporary building inspector to cover some of the inspections when the building inspectors are out on vacations • Staff would also like to add 5hrs to Paul L for more time to work on zoning issues. We have

	<p>had requests from some of the towns to increase our handling of more zoning issues. Phoebe reported that we have been asked to go to Selectboards with unresolved zoning issues, to have the Board decide whether or not to authorize Town Counsel. Members mentioned that zoning related costs are increasing but towns do not understand the time spent on zoning issues that do not bring in revenue. Members asked staff to educate the towns on the zoning work done at FCCIP.</p> <p>Committee members present agreed with the proposed changes. The changes will be voted on at the next quarterly meeting.</p>
<p>Online customer satisfaction survey results.</p>	<p>Phoebe gave a presentation on the results of the survey on online permitting program users. We had a great response rate. In general the responses were positive and we got some good suggestions for improvements to make (See attached pdf).</p>
<p>Other Business</p>	<p>None.</p>

**FCCIP QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT PROJECT:
ONLINE SOFTWARE
SURVEY RESULTS**

WHY DO THE SURVEY?

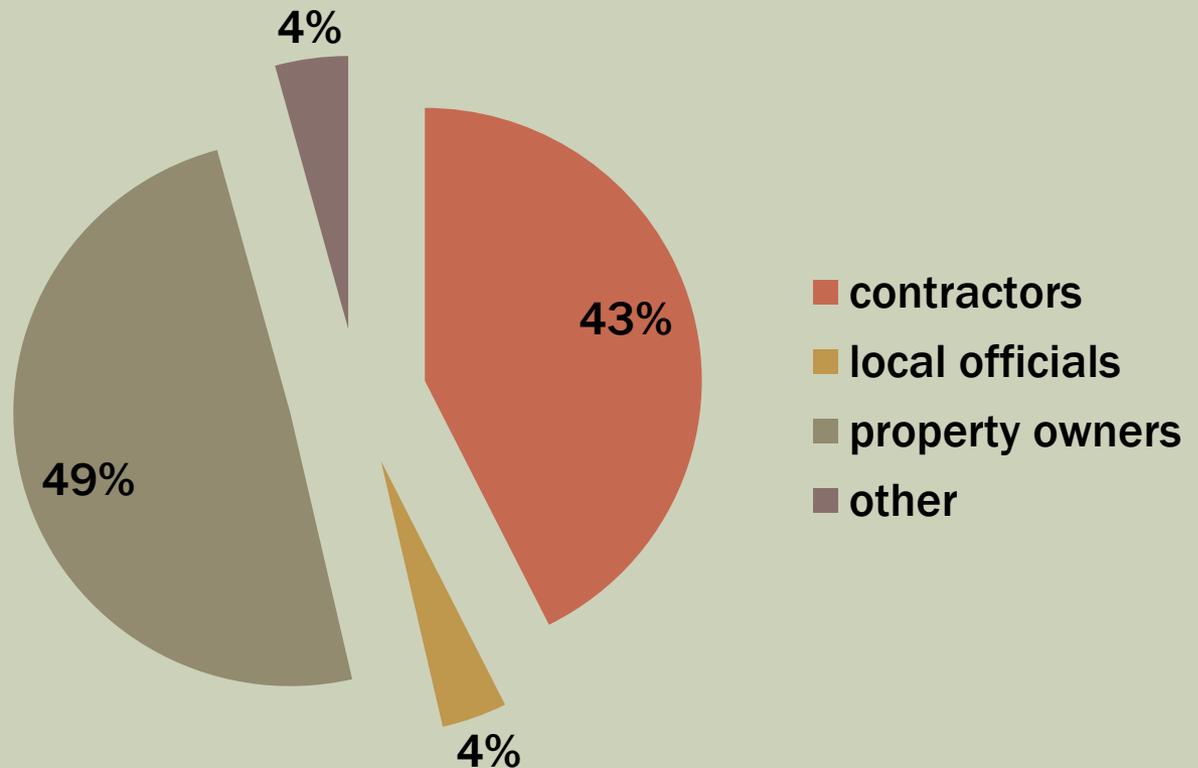


RESPONDENTS

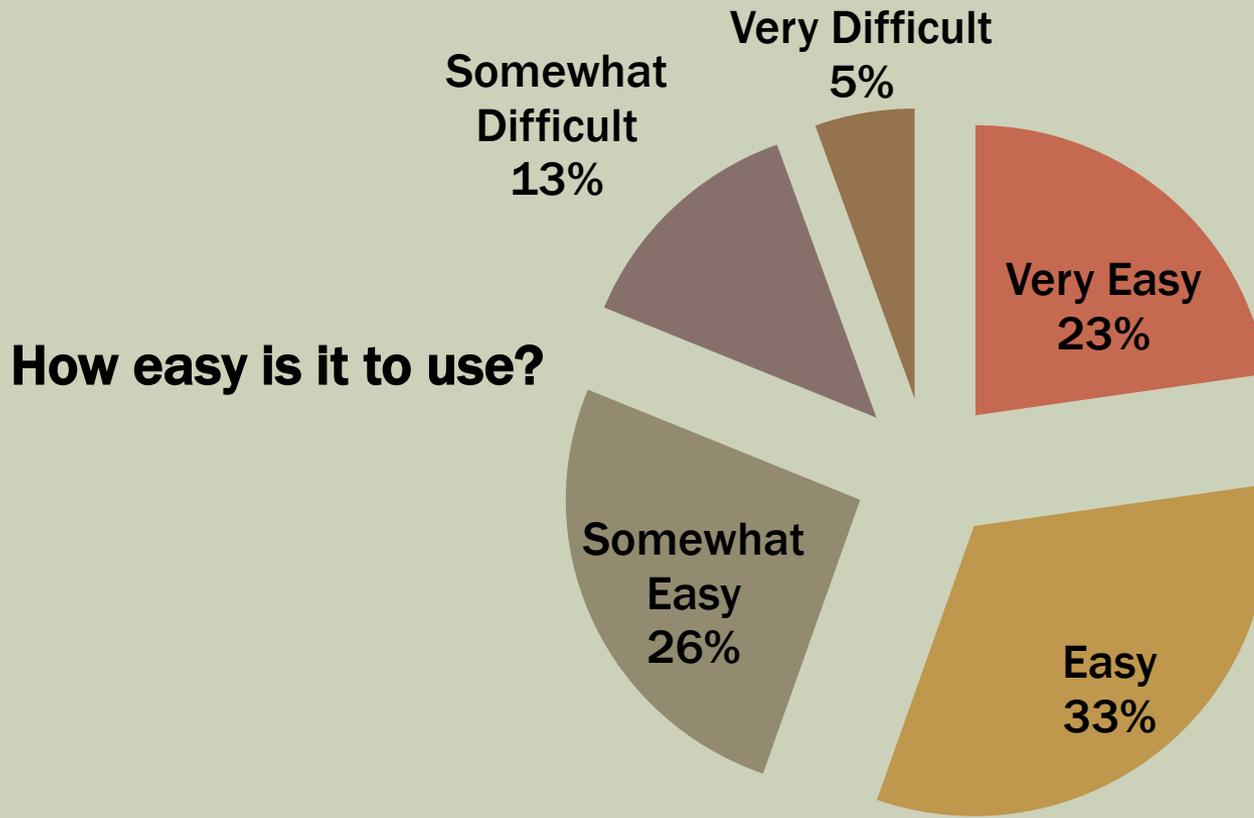
435 people filled out the survey – a response rate of 20%!

“other” included solar contractors, architects, realtors, custodians, tent contractors, and more

78% of respondents had used the system for 5 or fewer permits.



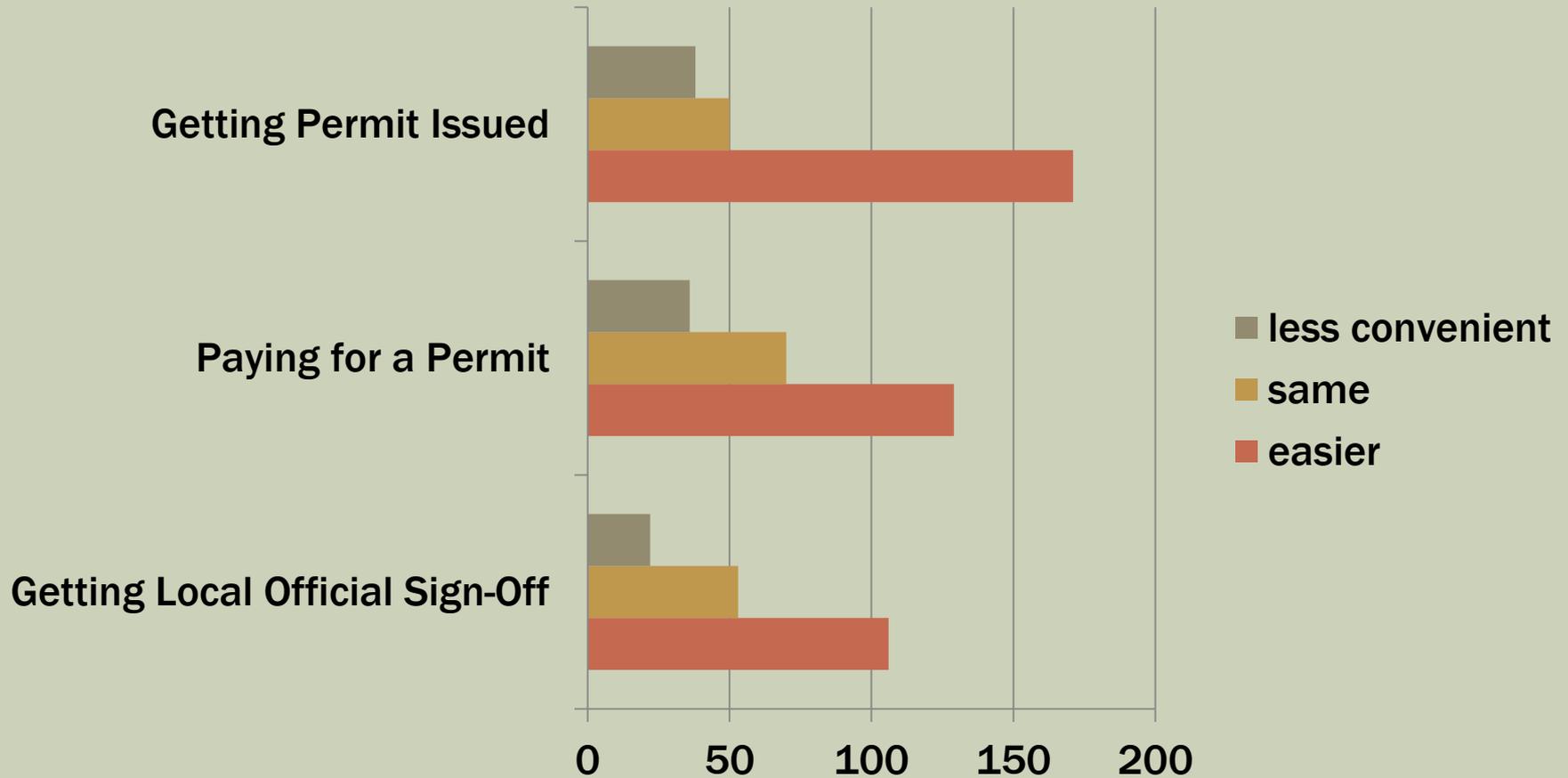
GENERALLY POSITIVE REACTIONS



POSITIVE FEEDBACK

- Contractors found it even easier than other respondents (58%)
- 66% of respondents said that getting answers to their questions was somewhat to very easy.
- Over 75% of respondents said they complete the application process in half an hour or less.
- The vast majority of respondents reported that the current system is more convenient for paying for a permit.

HOW DOES THE NEW SYSTEM COMPARE TO THE OLD ONE?



MANY HAPPY USERS

“Nice system.
Wish more cities
would copy your
system. Keep up
the good job”

“I love that I can
contact you by email
and that I always
get a prompt
response!”

“Program has come a
long way – the FRCOG
has been very
responsive in getting
bugs worked out”

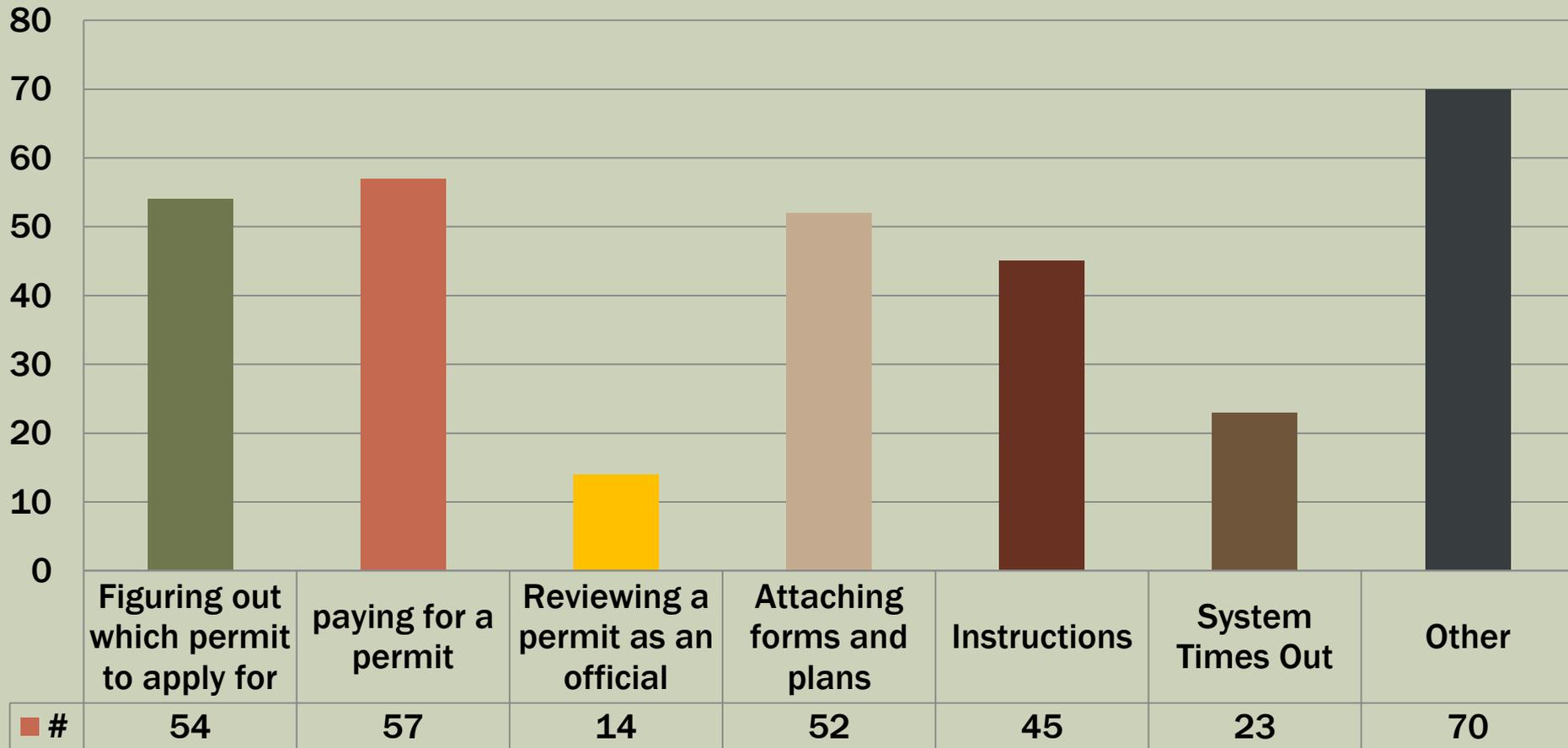
“It’s a terrific tool
that makes the
permitting
process **MUCH**
more efficient”

“So much more
consumer-
friendly than the
old process!”

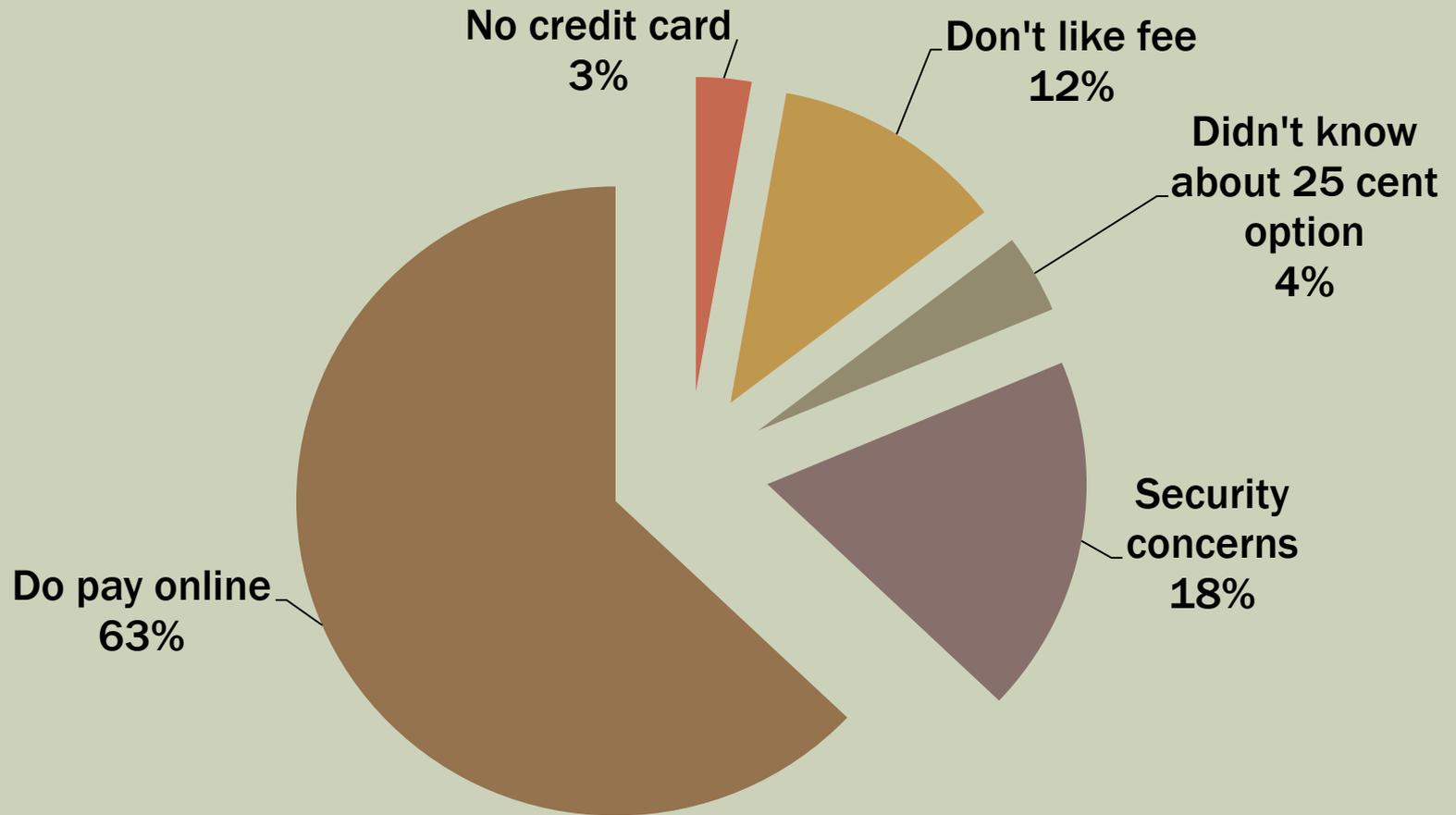
AREAS OF STRENGTH

- Convenience
- Customer Service
- Getting the Permit Issued
- Payment online

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?



ONLINE PAYMENT FEEDBACK



ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

System often times out and have to start application all over. Not always clear which permits need to fill out which parts of the application

Attaching plans has been problematic.. System timeouts also frustrating, as one needs to go back through whole process again.

It would be nice if there was a system of organization wherein active and inactive permits were organized into different categories, or different pages. It is confusing to see the list of every permit I've ever when I sign on.

When first applied wanted to pay but the option wasn't available. Waited 2 weeks and got an email, then was able to pay. Kinda redundant

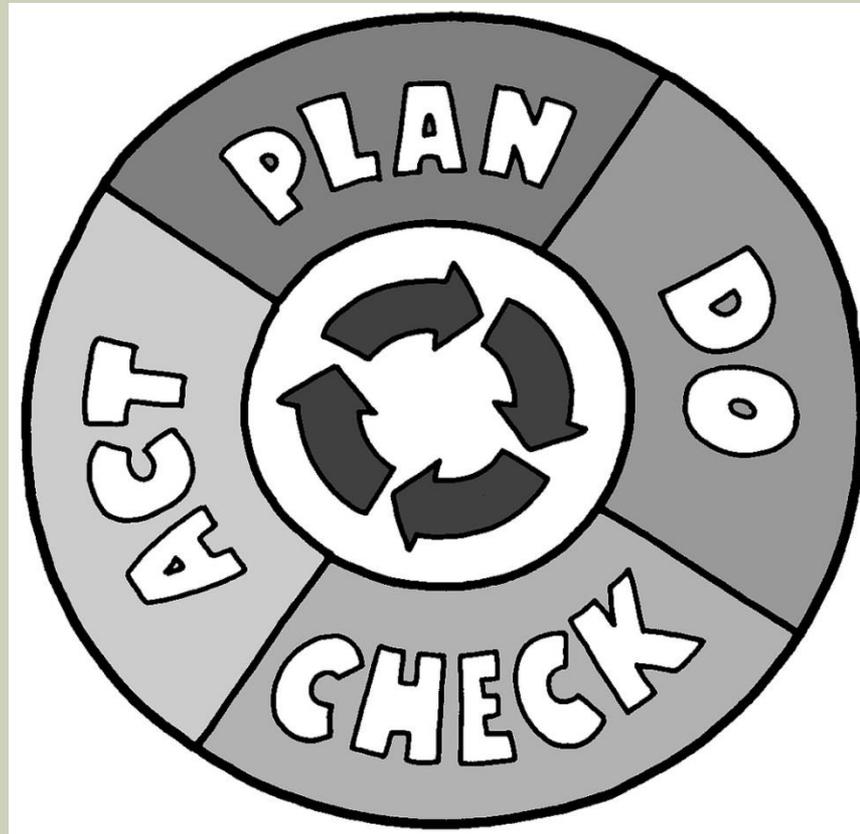
AREAS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT

- Plumbing and Electrical contractors have a harder time using the system than Building contractors. **We need to provide clear directions for them.**
- The option to pay by check (with only a 25 cent fee) is not clearly understood, and 11.5% of respondents reported not wanting to pay the credit card fee. **We need to make this option much more obvious.**
- One-fifth (23%) of respondents reported difficulty with attaching plans and PDFs, and there were many comments about this issue. **We need to give clear instructions on how to do this.**
- 11% reported issues with the system timing out while they are working on it, requiring a whole new process. **We need to fix this.**

MORE AREAS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT

- There were some special requests to have some forms (like workers comp) carry over from permit to permit for users. **We need to look into this with our developers.**
- There seems to be room for improvement in how well Local Officials are using the program, based on the low number that took the survey and comments from owners and contractors. **We should do more outreach to Boards of Health, Fire Chiefs and others.**
- Many requests for more and clearer instructions, particularly about how to use the standard permit for small projects. **We need to update our standard instructions.**

WHAT NEXT?



NEXT STEPS

- Share feedback with software developers on the programming issues identified (time out, attachments, etc.)
- Work with towns to make sure information about the program is as clear as possible on town web sites.
- Identify ways to help plumbers and electricians
- Make updated help sheets and FAQ sheets, and put links to them in as many places as possible.
- Think more about what information the front office (non-FCCIP) FRCOG staff should have and be able to help with.
- Choose measures to survey again in a year to see if we have improved.
- **What else?**