

Planning Commission Summary of Unified Bylaw Changes

This summary highlights significant changes which the Strafford Unified Bylaw makes to the current Strafford Zoning Ordinance adopted 6/1/2005 and the Strafford Subdivision Regulations adopted 6/15/1996. The Unified Bylaw combines these two ordinances into one bylaw as recommended in the Strafford Town Plan, p. 112. This combination is intended to streamline the permit process. The Unified Bylaw also makes a number of substantive changes to the current regulations. These include changes which will facilitate permitting for housing and small subdivisions without compromising the overall goals of efficient and orderly land use planning and the protection of open space.

The significant changes in the Unified Bylaw are as follows:

1. Development Review Board (DRB)

Section 1.10 recognizes the establishment of the DRB. Section 1.11 sets forth its jurisdiction. The DRB handles all permit review previously performed by the Planning Commission and the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

2. Minor Subdivisions

Section 7.3 allows the Administrative Officer to approve a two lot subdivision of a parcel once every five years without formal subdivision review by the D.R.B.

Subdivisions of three or more lots are reviewed as major subdivisions.

Section 7.7, General Planning Standards, sets forth the criteria for subdivision review by the DRB. They are substantially similar to Planning and Design Standards, pp. 13-20, in the current Subdivision Regulations. There are two changes of note. First, the deer yard section has been deleted based on professional advice that the deer population is robust and does not need special protection. Further, deer are impeding balanced forest regeneration because they browse heavily on Sugar Maple seedlings. Second, private roads which serve three or more lots are required to meet Town highway standards.

3. Setback Waivers

Section 6.3.1 allows the Administrative Officer and the DRB in limited circumstances to reduce setbacks.

4. Home Occupation

Section 5.1, allows two full time non-resident employees, an increase from one allowed in Home Occupation I in the current Zoning Ordinance, pp. 16-17. Home Occupation II in the current Zoning Ordinance, p. 17, which allows two employees and requires site plan approval, has been deleted.

5. Accessory Dwelling Units

Section 3.11 liberalizes the provisions for accessory dwelling units. Accessory dwelling units located within single family residential structures do not require an Administrative Permit as long as the building footprint and the number of bedrooms are unchanged. The owner is still required to reside on the lot but not in the primary dwelling. The size limit for the accessory unit has been increased to 1500 square feet or 50% of the primary dwelling, whichever is larger.

6. Mobile Home Parks

Section 3.13 establishes standards for mobile home parks. They are limited to the RR I district and require conditional use approval.

7. Conditional Use Approval

Section 6.1.4 includes criteria for conditional use approval which are more specific than the provisions in the current Zoning Ordinance, Section 4.10, p. 41. Also, when a permit application requires both conditional use approval and site plan approval, the hearings are combined.

8. Creation of RR II Zoning District

As recommended in the Town Plan, p. 67, the Unified Bylaw creates a Rural Residential II zoning district. It includes the most

rural and unfragmented areas of the town. See attached Zoning District map. The Town Plan states that the goal for RRII is very low density development with retail and commercial development limited to home based occupations. The uses in the RRII District are more limited than in the RRI. See Zoning Districts and Uses, Table 1, in the Unified Bylaw, p. 35 for a comparison. The uses allowed in RRI are the same as allowed in the RR District in the current Zoning Ordinance. See Section 2.4, Table 2- Districts and Uses, p. 14. Both RRI and RRII have the same three acre minimum lot size as the RR District in the current Zoning Ordinance.

9. Expansion of Village Centers Zoning District

Section 4.5.1 expands the Strafford and South Strafford Zoning Districts. See attached Zoning District maps.

10. Town Policies on Siting Wireless Telecommunications Facilities.

Section 3.17 sets forth town policies regarding location of telecommunication facilities. This policy statement is required in order for the Town's position on siting to receive substantial deference from the Public Utility Commission in licensing proceedings.