

Planning Commission Reporting Form Municipal Bylaw Amendments

This report is in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4441 (c) which states:

“When considering an amendment to a bylaw, the planning commission shall prepare and approve a written report on the proposal. A single report may be prepared so as to satisfy the requirements of this subsection concerning bylaw amendments and subsection 4384(c) of this title concerning plan amendments..... The report shall provide(:

(A) brief explanation of the proposed bylaw, amendment, or repeal andinclude a statement of purpose as required for notice under section §4444 of this title.

The Reading Planning Commission has been working on zoning changes for the last two years. Changes that were required to bring the bylaws into compliance with changes to Chapter 117 were adopted as interim bylaws by the Selectboard in August 2005. Since November of 2005, the Planning Commission has been updating the bylaws to bring them into conformance with the Town Plan which was revised and adopted in 2004. In addition to adding specific language in response to Town Plan changes, the bylaws were re-organized and re-formatted to make them easier to use. A summary of the major changes made to the zoning bylaws is as follows:

Chapter 117 changes include the following:

- *Purpose and definitions updated – bylaws “shall be in conformance with the Town Plan”*
- *Additional provisions allowing for accessory dwelling units in appurtenant structures, residential group homes, child care facilities*
- *Heights of certain structures are no longer regulated*
- *Nonconformities combined (use, structure, lots)*
- *New provisions for administration of applications and permits, including requirements for public hearings, notice and review periods*
- *Selectboard now has power to adopt bylaw changes*
- *Changes in appeals procedures*

Organizational changes:

- *Document was reorganized to make more user-friendly*
- *Districts moved toward beginning of the document,*
- *Specific use standards (affecting uses) and general regulations were separated*
- *Administrative requirements were separated from review process*

Additions:

- *New Ridgeline Overlay District*
- *Site Plan review added for subdivisions*
- *New standards for Mobile Home Parks, allowed in RR-5 and RR-10*

- *New PUD language with density bonuses offered for preservation of open space and creation of affordable housing*
- *Specified districts for multi-family housing and allowed smaller minimum lot size per dwelling unit*
- *Revised and added several definitions*
- *Revised sections on administrative procedures and development review*
- *Revised Mineral Resource Extraction language and changed permitted and conditional uses in Industrial/Mining zone*
- *Added language on buffers next to surface waters and wetlands, standards for review of ponds and swimming pools*

(A)nd shall include findings regarding how the proposal:

1. Conforms with or furthers the goals and policies contained in the municipal plan, including the effect of the proposal on the availability of safe and affordable housing:

Many of the changes made to the Reading Zoning Bylaws were in response to the goals of the Town Plan that was amended and adopted in 2005. Some of the pertinent goals are as follows:

Natural Resources Goals and Action Steps:

1. *Protect rare/irreplaceable natural areas from development. These include unique forests or ecosystems, rare or endangered species habitat, deer wintering areas, bear and moose habitat, streams and shoreland buffer areas, geologic features, high elevation areas (see Table 2.1).*
 - *Revise Reading's zoning bylaws where necessary or appropriate, and consider the use of subdivision regulations.*
3. *Protect scenic views wherever possible.*
 - *Amend zoning bylaws to maintain historically significant scenic views to the fullest extent possible.*
4. *Keep active agricultural and silvicultural lands productive, ecologically healthy, and economically viable.*
5. *Protect streams from pollution and erosion caused by development or road maintenance.*

Natural Resources Policies:

3. *Scenic views, especially from public roads and trails, are important social and economic resources to the Town. Development within these viewsheds shall occur in a manner that does not diminish their scenic value. Innovative development design, including appropriate placement of structures and adequate visual screening may be required to protect these scenic views.*
4. *The Town shall give careful consideration to the fragile and scenic nature of steep slopes (over 25%) and ridgelines when determining what kinds of development are appropriate*

in these sensitive areas.

Housing Goals and Action Steps:

1. *Allow for the development of a diversity of housing types that will serve all income levels.*
 - *Review zoning regulations to determine whether they discourage the development of affordable housing.*
 - *Make changes to zoning bylaws in accordance with changes to Chapter 117, including allowing for multifamily housing and greater flexibility in allowing for accessory apartments.*
 - *Consider providing density bonuses for low-income, clustered housing developments.*

Land Use Goals and Action Steps:

1. *Protect and enhance Reading's scenic landscape and rural character.*
 - *Revise zoning bylaws where necessary and consider the use of subdivision regulations to require that residential development be configured in a manner that preserves scenic resources, meadowland and fragile features and be clustered such that the majority of development activity is located on the least sensitive portion of the land.*
 - *Develop landscaping and site design standards in the zoning bylaw for commercial and industrial development.*
 - *Consider the creation of agricultural zones as a part of the zoning bylaw. Areas that could be so designated include the Bailey's Mills area, Reading Farms, Springbrook Farm, the Jenne Farm, Newhall Farm, Lexington Farm, Rowlee Farm, Barnleigh (Cook Farm), and existing specialty crop operations.*
 - *Consider the creation of an overlay district for ridgelines to protect these scenic amenities from development.*
 - *Create strict standards to minimize potential conflicts between current land uses and the extraction of renewable and finite resources. These standards should address the operation, maintenance, and use of extraction sites based on the unique conditions of the area affected.*
2. *Is compatible with the proposed future land uses and densities of the municipal plan:*

At this time there are no proposed density changes other than to allow mobile home parks to have one unit per acres in 5 and 10-acre districts, and to allow density bonuses for Planned Unit Developments. The proposed Ridgeline Overlay District corresponds to the 1800-foot elevation and "conservation" areas in Reading's future land use map.

3. *Carries out, as applicable, any specific proposals for any planned community facilities."*

There are currently no specific proposals pending for planned community facilities, therefore this question is not applicable.

Please Note:

- ❖ The planning commission shall hold at least one public hearing within the municipality after public notice on any proposed bylaw, amendment or repeal and;
- ❖ At least **15** days prior to the first hearing, a copy of the proposed plan or amendment and the written report shall be delivered with proof of the receipt, or mailed by certified mail, return receipt requested, to each of the following:
 1. the chairperson of the planning commission of each abutting municipality, or in the absence of any planning commission in an abutting municipality, to the clerk of that abutting municipality;
 2. the executive director of the regional planning commission of the area in which the municipality is located;
 3. the department of housing and community affairs within the agency of commerce and community development.
- ❖ The planning commission may make revisions to the proposed bylaw, amendment, or repeal and to the written report, and shall then submit the proposed bylaw, amendment or repeal and the written report to the legislative body of the municipality.
- ❖ Simultaneously, with the submission, the planning commission shall file with the clerk of the municipality a copy of the proposed bylaw, amendment, or repeal, and the written report for public review.