

LAND USE DEPARTMENT

The Land Use Department administers the business of the Town's land use agencies. This fiscal year, the Department began to assist the North Cove Historic District Commission to increase its efficiency in meeting the needs of the public in the permitting process. The Department continues to serve the Architectural Review Board, Conservation Commission, Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Zoning Commission, as well as special ad hoc committees of the Board of Selectmen. We coordinate with other officials and departments as needed, and, this year, collaboratively implemented many new practices in data development and reporting for map-making and regulation enforcement.

Generally, the Land Use Department conducts planning of the Town's land in parallel strategies – the first being “proactive” (*long-range planning* via implementation of the Town's Plan of Conservation & Development) and the second being “reactive” to market forces (*current planning* via regulation of individual's site-specific initiatives). This past year, the Department reorganized its staff functions to strengthen these parallel strategies. In particular, the Department continued to make significant progress in its effort to implement its computerized mapping/database program – the *geographic information system*. The addition of a part-time “map-maker” enables the Department to develop graphic data layers (based on databases) to create maps for town-level planning. Additionally, the new Enforcement Officer position now combines permitting, enforcement, and inspection for the land use agencies, especially authorized by the Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission and the Zoning Commission. The “one-stop shop” approach guides homeowners and developers alike from conceptual design to permitting and through construction with minimal returns to the drawing board. The Enforcement Officer maintains regular office hours from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. daily, reserving afternoons or evenings for “field work” or public meetings, respectively.

Through the Board of Selectmen, the Land Use Department continues to bring together on a quarterly basis the executive boards of the agencies that regularly deal with land use issues. The goal is to encourage cooperation, engage communication, and promote efficiency on an intra-municipal basis. This year, the land use agencies gathered to address 1) the Board of Selectmen's *Community Rating System Initiative* to reduce flood insurance rates; 2) the Board of Selectmen's *Land Acquisition Committee* for future acquisition of remaining vacant lands for municipal purposes of conservation or development; and 3) the Water Pollution Control Authority's initiative to create legislation for *Wastewater Management Districts* overlaying the beach communities. As evidenced by the land use agencies' annual reports, Old Saybrook is one of the most progressive towns in the State in implementing a comprehensive plan for its use of land.

Additionally, the Department coordinates workshops to provide continuing educational opportunities for its “citizen planners” who volunteer so much of their valuable time and expertise as decision-makers in land use matters. This year, the Department hosted many excellent programs: 1) UCONN/DEP's *Focus on the Coast*; 2) UCONN Sea Grant's *Wet Lands*; 3) the UCONN Cooperative Extension's *Options for Density*; 4) DEP's *Coastal Site Plan Review*; and 5) USDA's *Protecting Inland Wetlands from Invasive Plants*. As always, the Department is delighted in working with the members of the land use agencies that volunteer time and expertise as the human resources of the Town. The volunteerism demonstrated by commission members spurred more residents and students to offer their time to work on land use projects that pique their particular interests. We thank Anne Lewandowski for her time in writing articles for *Saybrook Events* and stocking the land use literature for the Acton Public Library's “Town Hall After Hours” Program, as well as Bryan Zielinski, for diligent investigation of resources at the foundation of long-range planning – open spaces, conservation easements, historical resources, road endings, and potential vernal pools. The Land Use Department encourages others to get involved, as well, by contacting us at 395-3131.

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