

LAND USE DEPARTMENT

The Land Use Department conducts planning of the Town's land in parallel strategies – the first being *current planning* via regulation of individual's site-specific initiatives (“reactive” to market forces) and the second being *long-range planning* via implementation of the Town's Plan of Conservation & Development (“proactive” to municipal needs).

The Department administers the business of the Town's land use agencies, including the Architectural Review Board, Conservation Commission, Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission, North Cove Historic District Commission, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Zoning Commission. We thank Bryan Zielinski for his excellent work during his two-year tenure as the Recording Clerk for the Planning and Conservation Commissions. This past year, we made significant progress in our efforts to better the permitting and enforcement functions with the addition of a part-time Land Use Inspector. We maintain a “one-stop shop” approach in guiding 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.

The Department coordinates planning, permitting, and implementation of municipal improvements proposed by the land use agencies or the Board of Selectmen's Land Acquisition Committee, Village Gateway Committee, Town Green Committee, and Boston Post Road project. Through the Board of Selectmen, we continue 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 Conservation Commission's *Guidebook to Conservation & Open Spaces* to aid other land use agencies in their review of applications for development by focusing on special conservation areas that warrant extra sensitivity; and 2) the Board of Selectmen's *Boston Post Road Corridor Study* to prepare a plan for improvements and design guidelines for the Boston Post Road.

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, we hosted many excellent programs: 1) *Roles & Responsibilities of Land Use Commissions* by the Center for Land Use Education and Research; 2) *Capture the Silts, Not the Salamanders* by the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District; 3) *Annual Tour of Conservation Sites* by the Conservation Commission; 4) *Dockabilities: Build-out Study of the Lower Connecticut River* by the Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency; and 5) *Strip Development* by the Center for Land Use Education and Research. As always, we are 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 encourage others to get involved, as well, by contacting us at 395-3131.

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