

# Planning Commission Reporting Form for Municipal Bylaw Amendments

## Town of Reading, VT

### Proposed amendments to the *Town of Reading Zoning Ordinance* (draft 04/03/2019)

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.*”

The above referenced proposed bylaws are summarized as follows:

1. **Brief explanation of the proposed bylaw, amendment or repeal; and a statement of purpose as required for notice under §4444 of this title:**

A number of changes are being proposed by the Planning Commission to clarify a few existing zoning provisions and to make changes needed in order for the zoning to be in conformance with the *2015 Reading Town Plan*. The proposed zoning changes are summarized below:

- The Zoning Districts Map was updated in order to follow parcel lines more closely. Most district boundaries have modest changes intending to address existing conditions and parcel boundaries and to avoid splitting lots into more than one zoning district, to the extent possible.
- The Ridgeline Overlay District Map was refined in order to be more accurate. The proposed new Ridgeline Overlay District is generally smaller than the 2007 Ridgeline Overlay District.
- In 2009, a Significant Wildlife Habitat Overlay District (SWHOD) and Map was initially proposed as a way to implement the 2008 Forest Fragmentation Study and the Town Plan. It has not been adopted to date. In 2016-2017, the proposed SWHOD was refined based upon newer information and input from the community. The purpose of this new overlay district is to “protect Reading’s Wildlife Travel Corridors and Deer Wintering Habitat by regulating the location and layout of development on these lands. It is not the Town’s intention to prevent development in these areas but rather to encourage development that will minimize and mitigate the impacts on the significant wildlife resources.” Proposed dimensional standards for this district include a 25 acre maximum density standard, with a minimum lot size of 5 acres.
- Section 4.16, regarding wireless telecommunication facilities, was updated to:
  - Address Town Plan language (e.g. collocating, stealth design),
  - Clarify existing provisions (e.g. height limitations, review procedures), and
  - Add newer statutory requirements (e.g. exemptions, de minimis impacts).
- The proposal includes moving the existing subdivision language in Section 4.14 to a new Section 5.6, and refining the subdivision review process. This proposal includes:
  - Adding a new expedited review process for lot line adjustments,
  - Clarifying the review procedures in accordance with state statutory requirements,
  - Eliminating the pre-application meeting requirement for proposed subdivisions,

- Allowing for waivers of certain subdivision requirements under special circumstances,
- Identifying that stone walls, cellar holes and stone-lined wells are included in those existing features that should be identified and preserved, as much as possible, during the subdivision review process,
- Clarifying the existing standards related to preventing undue fragmentation of farmland and forests,
- Identifying how an applicant can address the standard related to not creating an undue burden on public facilities or services,
- Modifying the road and driveway standards,
- Addressing the need for legal mechanisms to ensure that common improvements are maintained (e.g. homeowners associations or similar legal arrangement).
- The proposed amendments include deleting the existing flood hazard provisions contained in Section 5.5, and replacing it with new language intended to promote community flood resilience, including:
  - Alternative flood hazard language that is intended to clarify the existing standards and procedures for lands located within Special Flood Hazard Areas as mapped by FEMA,
  - New provisions that would regulate development within river corridors, which include both River Corridors as mapped by ANR as well as those areas within 50 feet of all other small streams in Reading included in the Vermont Hydrography Dataset.
- Section 3.4 includes changes as it relates to height limitations for wireless telecommunication facilities per Section 4.16.
- Section 3.8 adds a new classification for "municipal signs".
- Section 5.1.2, Permit Exemptions, was amended, adding "sculpture" and "monument" with a maximum size limitation.
- In zones RR-5, R-1, RC-A, RC-B, we added a new use "cultural facilities".
- Section 6.0 was modified to allow for administrative review of telecommunication facility projects that involve no impacts or de minimis impacts, lot line adjustments, and extension requests for the plat recording deadline.
- Section 6.4 was modified in order to address some citation errors in the existing document and to modify the public hearing requirements for subdivision review.
- A few definitions were added as related to the terminology used in the proposed amendments.

**2. How does the proposal conform with or further the goals and policies contained in the municipal plan, including the effect of the proposal on the availability of safe and affordable housing:**

Most of the proposed changes are intended specifically to further goals and policies contained in the *2015 Reading Town Plan*. As discussed above, these goals and policies generally include promoting flood resilience, maintaining the functionality of wildlife habitat areas and wildlife travel corridors, reducing fragmentation of farmlands and forests, and realizing the need for

telecommunication facilities while also minimizing their impacts. The changes do not impact the availability of safe and affordable housing.

3. **Is the proposal compatible with the proposed future land uses and densities of the municipal plan:**

Yes, the proposed amendment is consistent with the future land uses identified in the Town Plan. These proposed changes include Zoning District Map adjustments that are more consistent with the Future Land Use Map in the Town Plan.

4. **How does the proposal carry out, as applicable, any specific proposals for any planned community facilities:**

This proposal does not directly apply to any specific proposals for planning community facilities. However, the proposed additions to the subdivision language identify a better approach for applicants to demonstrate that their projects do not result in undue impacts on municipal facilities or services.