



Town of Winchester
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PLANNING, ZONING, AND BUILDING

In 1915 Winchester established one of the first Planning Boards in Massachusetts, charged with making recommendations for future civic development. In 1924 the Board recommended, and the Town Meeting adopted, a Zoning bylaw-- again one of the first. A master plan was devised in the 1920's a Subdivision Control Law was adopted in 1953. Several revisions have been made since 1953, and the last revision was January of 1981.

The Planning Board (Five Members, three-year terms, no salary)

The powers and duties of the Planning Board - studying and reporting on the resources and needs of the community, making plans for future development - derive from state legislation and fall into three distinct areas of responsibility: planning, zoning, and subdivision control. The Board strives to exercise continuing foresight in guiding the course of future development and ensuring stability inland-use patterns of the Town. The board studies open land and reviews development plans with the conservation Commission before site plan approval is granted. A consultant is retained by the board on a fixed-retainer basis. focus of study in recent years has been upon the effects of elementary school closings, another on the revitalization of Winchester Center. The Planning Board keeps a current Zoning By-laws map and reviews it periodically, making recommendations for revision and amendments as it deems necessary. Such recommendations, after a public hearing, are submitted to the Town Meeting, which requires a two-thirds vote of the Meeting in order to adopt the recommended change. The 1924 By-law had a major revision by the Planning Board which was adopted by the Town Meeting in 1974. Copies of the Zoning By-laws are available in the town Clerk's office, and it is on file in the Library.

The Winchester Housing Authority (Five members- four elected for five-year terms, one appointed by the governor, no salary)

Since its inception in 1970, The Winchester Housing Authority has been authorized to manage the construction, financing, maintenance, and rental policies of low-cost housing for low-income families and the elderly. The Authority reports to the state. Construction is financed by state bonds, and rental policies are subject to approval by the executive Office of Communities and Development (EOCD)

The first project, the Mary E. Murphy Apartment for the elderly, on Palmer Street, opened in 1974 with 52 units, including four for the handicapped. There is a community hall in the complex. A second complex for the elderly, John L. Doherty Apartment at Westley Street, contains 60 units was opened in mid- 1978. This also includes four units for the handicapped. The Housing Authority's office is located on Westley Street. The Authority employs a part-time, salaried, Executive Director who act as supervisor for the

apartments. There are two maintenance employees, one full-time and one part-time. The office is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM until 1:00 PM.

The Winchester Housing Authority decides which of the many applicants are to fill vacancies in the units under its supervision. The Authority meets the second Monday evening of each month. According to the 1953 Subdivision Control Law, detailed plans for any proposed development are submitted to the Planning Board and must be approved prior to commencement of construction. A public hearing is held by the board before it rules on a development proposal. Street frontage, access, water and sewer installations, drainage, utility service, and other functions affecting public health, welfare, and safety are regulated under the law. If all rules and regulations are met by the developer, the Planning Board cannot deny approval. The Engineering Department enforces the Subdivision Control Law for the Planning board. Once newly developed streets become public ways, the Department of Public works is responsible for them. Winchester is part of a regional planning area under the auspices of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

The Planning board meets the first and third Monday evenings of each month. The five members are joined by the Town Engineer, who serves as the clerk of their meeting.

The Building Department

The Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer is appointed by the Town Manager. He administers the state Building Code, the Zoning, and Sign By-Laws. He issues building permits, inspects work in progress (as well as completed work) and public buildings for code violations. He supervises a Zoning Assistant and two part-time employees: a gas/plumbing inspector and a wiring inspector. Any property owner wishing to make alterations to a building, or to utilities servicing, must obtain a permit from the Building commissioner before commencing construction.

The Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer is responsible for administration, implementation, and enforcement of the Town's land-use policies as stated in the Zoning By-law. He works with the Planning Board or for purposes of legislative review, and recommends amendments from time to time.

The Engineering Department

An integral part of planning, zoning, and building is the Engineering Department, comprised of the Town Engineer, Assistant Town Engineer, four staff engineers, and a secretary who is shared with the Planning Board. The Town Engineer, who is appointed by the Town Manager, assists the Planning board in its deliberations. The Department prepares the zoning map and the land-use map, advises developers of the rules and regulations, and provides inspection for developments built under Subdivision Control. The Engineering Department provides services, prepares and furnishes information, advises and assists all Town agencies with respect to engineering matters. All plans and engineering records are in custody of the Department. It maintains an up to date file of assessors' systems/ The Department works closely with the office of the Town Manager/ Board of Selectmen in providing plans and information. Design, cost estimates, and

preparatory work for projects undertaken by the Department of Public Works-such as new curbing, sidewalks, street construction, parks, cemetery, and water and sewer-are executed in the Engineering Department.

The Board of Appeal (three members, three-year terms, no salary)

Residents/property owners have recourse to the board of appeals when seeking relief from decisions of the building Commissioner's Zoning enforcement Officer. The board hears and decides applications for special permits and petitions for variances from the terms of the zoning By-Laws